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THE REIGN OF PATTI

MME. PATTI AS ROSINA
From a painting by Winterhalter

THE REIGN OF PATTI

BY

HERMAN KLEIN

Author of "Thirty Years of Musical Life in London," etc.

ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS

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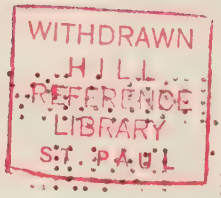

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IN MEMORY OF
THE GREAT SINGER
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK OF HER LIFE
TO HER HUSBAND
BARON ROLF CEDERSTRÖM

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PREFACE

THE Reign of Patti should be dated from her conquest of the London public at the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden, in May, 1861. It ended, properly speaking, with her final appearances in opera at the same house in 1895, a period covering thirty-four years. But if we include her subsequent labors as a concert singer, until her ultimate farewell at the Royal Albert Hall in December, 1906, her reign must be said to have lasted for more than forty-five years.

Again, if we reckon the interval precedent to the actual "reign," from the date when she made her New York début as a child prodigy (*ætat* 7) in 1850, it will be seen that the total length of Adelina Patti's active and unbroken career as a public singer extended over no fewer than fifty-six years. In any or either case, she beat every record for legitimate artistic longevity known to musical history, including those of John Braham and Sims Reeves.

Her preëminence as a vocalist was no less pronounced. Catalani, Pasta, Malibran, Jenny Lind, Grisi, may have been singers as great as Patti. That no critic now living is in a position to determine. But, at best, those famous artists only divided between them the honors due to "queens of opera" during the first half of the nineteenth century. The honors of the second half were wholly and exclusively monopolized by Patti. Alike as to the particular quality of her genius, its versatility, the natural beauty of her organ, the perfection of her technique, the universality of her fame, and the undying strength of her popularity, she stood alone, utterly beyond the pale of rivalry. The "Queen of Song," as she was commonly called, was equally the solitary "Queen of Opera" of her time.

For the suggestion of the title of this book I am indebted

indirectly to my friend Mr. H. E. Krehbiel, so long the eminent musical critic of the *New York Tribune*. In the course of an "Appreciation of Patti"—not the least eloquent page in his interesting "Chapters of Opera,"[1]—he speaks of a "period which ought to be referred to for all time in the annals of music as the Reign of Patti." The hint has been taken with thanks.

Many years ago, during one of my earlier visits to Craig-y-Nos Castle, I asked Mme. Patti whether she meant ever to give to the world the story of her life. "Yes," she said, "I am going to do so very shortly"; then added in one of her quaint whispers: "I will tell you in confidence that our friend Beatty Kingston is going to help me to write it."

Time went on. Beatty Kingston died; and there came no sign of the autobiography. So far as I could ascertain, he had never written a line or even begun to collate his material. One day I put the question anew: "What about this story of your life?" "It is not yet written," answered Mme. Patti, "but I am determined that it shall be done, and now I am going to ask you if *you* will be my *collaborateur?*" Unhesitatingly and with alacrity I accepted a task that I regarded at once as a duty and an honor.

Notwithstanding this, delays occurred, and the work still remained unstarted. First there was the illness and death of Nicolini. Not long afterward came the nuptial event related in the twentieth chapter of this book; and from that day there was no further chance of writing a life of Patti from her own notes and personal recollections. These would assuredly have constituted a precious fountain of biographical detail, anecdote, and incident. On the other hand, her letters, penned in an Italian hand of characteristic neatness, while

[1] New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1909. See Appendix U.

remarkable always for their depth of cordial sentiment or their affectionate warmth, reveal no features of absorbing interest.

It was not only because Mme. Patti had designated me as her "*collaborateur*" that I decided six years ago, on my own initiative, to undertake this work. It was also because I had in my possession much of the material essential for it; because I had closely followed the course of her unique career from its zenith to its close; because I had been her friend as well as her critic, had listened "many a time and oft" to her own *viva-voce* remarks about the people and the events of her epoch. Thus I have quoted her; I have quoted the men who wrote of her; I have even ventured to quote myself. Not least of all, where opinion or statement has been controversial, I have carefully weighed the evidence on both sides and striven to arrive at a true and impartial judgment.

Only two serious difficulties beset me in the fulfilment of this "labor of love." One was the sparseness of either authentic or reliable information concerning Patti's childhood and her juvenile career. The whole story has never been set forth in coherent form or with the minuteness of detail that it deserved. The ascertainable facts had to be pieced together for the first time.

The other difficulty was to limit the use of superlatives and avoid the semblance of hyperbole in writing about the life and achievements of a most extraordinary artist. In this respect she was the despair of every journalist who tried to do her justice during her crowded half-century of public triumphs. Repetition has in the circumstances been inevitable. To a charge of exaggeration, however, the author would refuse to plead guilty. The reader of these pages who is too young to have heard Patti in her best days, and who cannot conceive the wonder of the miracle that she was, must be content now to "mark, learn, and inwardly"—believe.

London, November, 1919.

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THE REIGN OF PATTI

THE REIGN OF PATTI

CHAPTER I

Parentage and Birth (1843)—Story of the Patti Family—Hereditary Vocal Influences—"Norma" and Her New Baby—The Opera and Its Sequel—The Fiction of the Green-Room—The Madrid Baptismal Register—A Call to America—The Patti Family Emigrates—Italian Opera in New York (1845–47)—Max Maretzek—Managerial Fiasco—The Child at the Opera

"MY father was a Sicilian; my mother a native of Rome; I saw the light of the world in Madrid, where they were both singing during the Italian season, and I was brought up in New York."

Here, in her own words, uttered in 1877 to her friend Eduard Hanslick, the famous Viennese critic,[1] stands the brief record of the nationality and parentage of Adelina Patti, the greatest singer of her time, and, as many have thought, the greatest operatic soprano of all time. It was her fortunate destiny to be able to look back upon a half a century of triumphs more brilliant, more numerous than ever before fell to the lot of prima donna. Her public career, which began in 1850 and terminated in 1906, has had no parallel in the annals of musical history.

The story of the Patti family reads like a romance. Its main interest starts, of course, with the epoch-making event that occurred at Madrid in the spring of 1843. Still, it is worth tracing a little farther back, if only for the sake of noting the source of those hereditary influences which played so important a part in the growth and development of a very

1 "Musikalische Stationen," Berlin, 1880.

remarkable genius. One hears commonly enough the term "a born singer." As a matter of fact, the singer to whom it can be justly applied is a *rara avis* indeed; and the particular gifts that warranted it in the case of Adelina Patti must be attributed to an especial degree to causes with which heredity and family surroundings are intimately connected.

To what extent her ancestors were musical there is no evidence to show. All we know is that her parents were of pure Italian blood—Sicilian on the paternal, Roman and Venetian on the maternal side. It has been stated, with apparent good reason, that through the mother's family there had descended a strain of decided artistic temperament; but whether tending in the direction of the theatre it is hard to say. Enough that in the generation which concerns us—namely, those two worthy opera singers whose chief claim to distinction in this world lay in the fact that they were the father and mother of Adelina Patti—musical talent revealed itself with unmistakable opulence.

Salvatore Patti was a native of Catania. Trained for the operatic stage, he became an acceptable *tenore robusto* and found plentiful occupation in the principal Sicilian towns. There, in 1837, he fell in love with the leading prima donna of the troupe in which he was singing. Dark, good-looking, not yet out of his twenties, a first-rate hand at love-making both on and off the stage, he seems to have proved quite irresistible to his fair colleague. Indeed, everybody liked Salvatore Patti. Forty years later Dr. Hanslick, speaking of him to his famous daughter, described him, on the occasion of her first visit to Vienna, as "the calm, good-natured chairman, serving out the soup at the head of your small family table."[1] Only then he was a "tall and stately man with long white hair and black eyes." Here in Catania he was the young, hot-

[1] "Musikalische Stationen."

blooded Sicilian tenor, courting a proud Roman matron upon his native heath.

Truth to tell, Signora Caterina Barili, *née* Chiesa, was no longer in the first flush of youth, but a widow with three boys and a girl. These were the children of her brief but happy marriage with a well-known singing master and composer named Barili. He had seen her one day when, like another Rebecca, she was drawing water from a well (otherwise a Roman fountain) and singing blithely over her task. Struck by her voice and good looks, he married her and trained her for opera. She quickly made her début and won an emphatic success.

Then Barili died, leaving behind him only a name and the aforesaid children, Ettore, Antonio, Nicolo, and Clotilda. With such a burden upon her shoulders, the widow was only too glad to continue the pursuit of her profession. Fortunately, hers was an increasing reputation, especially in southern Italy. In Naples she was a favorite; so much so that (according to a proud family tradition) she made even the illustrious Grisi jealous, and the latter, "having on one occasion been thrown into the shade by her, would not again appear in the same town with her." Be this as it may, history vouches for the fact that when Donizetti produced his opera, "The Siege of Calais," at Naples in 1836, he wrote the part of the heroine for Signora Barili, who duly created it.

In the following year she married Salvatore Patti. The two artists continued their careers for three or four years in Italy, where their first two children, Amalia and Carlotta, were born. Later they began an annual engagement for the season of Italian opera at Madrid; and there, in 1842, Signora Barili-Patti gave birth to her son Carlo,[1] who, with the four

1 Destined to become a violinist and conductor of some repute in the United States. After many wanderings he settled down at Memphis, and died at St. Louis in 1873.

small Barili children and the Patti girl babies, brought the juvenile family up to a total of seven.

Happily, the tale was not to end at the magic number. In February of 1843 this industrious mother was again singing in opera at Madrid, and even now another addition to the growing circle was known to be close at hand. However, little affairs of this kind seem to have made no difference to her; so long as her voice remained in good order—and evidently it did—nothing else mattered. The shadow of the coming event did not deter her from undertaking, on the evening of the 9th, the tolerably exacting rôle of *Norma*.

Otherwise the appropriateness of the character was beyond question. *Norma* is essentially a motherly sort of person; albeit at one moment of the opera an unkind fate well-nigh impels her to the desperate expedient of taking her children's lives. Whether the latter were represented in this instance by a couple of the Barili boys or by the usual borrowed mites (Amalia and Carlotta being still too tiny for the purpose), history does not relate. But it is certain that the excellent prima donna went through her part with courage and her wonted energy to the end—or very nearly to the end—of the opera. It was only then that trouble began.

Many pretty variations have been invented to lend color to a sufficiently interesting episode. One of these, which obtained considerable currency in the sixties, declared that "the diva was actually born in the green-room of an opera-house. Her mother, a prima donna of some talent, was singing with the celebrated Signor Sinico, when she was suddenly taken ill and carried to the green-room, where Adelina Patti was born. Sinico has related how in haste he tore up his wardrobe to find wraps for the infant, little guessing it would be the greatest singer in the world."

It is scarcely necessary to say that the "celebrated" author

of this story evolved it from what Americans call "whole cloth"; and, for a person of such vivid imagination, it is a wonder his "guessing" powers were not yet more enterprising. When he related this version of the occurrence Signor Sinico[1] had for some years been a teacher of singing in London, and possibly his memory had begun to play him tricks. The legend at the wraps, apart from its inherent improbability, was as far from the truth as the statement regarding the *locale* of the event itself.

For, to be strictly accurate, the baby was not born until four o'clock on the following afternoon. That "Norma" was first of all carried to the green-room, there is no reason to doubt; but it passes the limits of ordinary credence that she should be allowed to remain there for some sixteen or seventeen hours, even with the resources of Signor Sinico and his wardrobe at hand. As a matter of fact, the worthy Salvatore was also on the spot, and lost no time in having his wife removed to their lodgings—a proceeding fraught with little risk in the case of so robust a *mère de famille*. And there, on the afternoon of the 10th of February, the tiny stranger duly made her first appearance and improvised her first cadenza on the world's stage.

Naturally, an event of such engrossing interest and importance, taking place under unusual conditions, was narrated in after years by others besides Signor Sinico. His account, however, is noted here not merely because of its picturesqueness, but because he, of all men, was most under a moral obligation to state the exact facts and not glorify himself at the expense of truth. The reason for this is that some two months after the birth of the wonder-child whose future he could not "guess," Sinico and his wife were standing as sponsors for her at the baptismal font of a neighboring church.

[1] He was the father (by a second marriage) of the well-known soprano, Madame Sinico, who sang in London for many seasons under Mapleson's management at Her Majesty's and Drury Lane.

The date of Adelina Patti's birth was for many years incorrectly given in every published musical dictionary. In the earlier editions of "Fétis" the name of Patti was not even included among existing singers. The second edition, printed in 1868, still ignored an artist who had for seven years been creating a sensation all over Europe, yet spared thirteen pages for a biography of Paganini! In the first edition of "Grove" the date was wrongly stated as February 19, 1843; and, curiously enough (thus perhaps accounting for the mistake), the 19th was the day of the month which for a long while Mme. Patti herself observed as her *jour de fête*. Others have mentioned April 8; but that was the date of the ceremony of baptism.

Dr. Hugo Riemann, in his Dictionary of Music, was the first authority to give the correct date, namely, February 10. It may be assumed that he derived it from the copy of the baptismal register which was made in Madrid and first published some five-and-twenty years ago. Anyhow, a translation of this unimpeachable document shall be given here:

Book of Baptisms, No. 42, page 153. In the City of Madrid, Province of the same name, on April 8, 1843, I, Don Josef Losada, Vicar of the Parish of St. Louis, solemnly baptized a girl, born at four o'clock in the afternoon of *the 10th February of the current year*, the legitimate daughter of Salvatore Patti, professor of music, born at Catania, in Sicily, and of Caterina Chiesa, born in Rome. The paternal grandparents were Pietro Patti and Concepcion Marino, and the maternal were John Chiesa, born at Venice, and Louise Caselli, born at Marino, in the Pontifical States.

The child was given the names of Adela Juana Maria.

There assisted at the baptism as godfather Giuseppe Sinico, of Venice, professor of music, and, as godmother, his wife, Rosa Monara Sinico, born at Cremona, in Lombardy, whom I have warned of the spiritual duties they have contracted to fulfil by this act; and as witnesses Julien Huezal and Casimir Garcia, born at Madrid, sacristans of this parish.

In witness whereof I have signed and delivered the present certificate, 8th April, etc.

JOSEF LOSADA.

The Madrid opera season terminated at Easter, when the Patti family went back to Italy and settled down for a time at Milan. There the tiny Adelina grew into a strong, healthy child, developing fresh lung-power every day, though not as yet with tonal results indicative of the voice that was soon to delight the world. It was, however, the New World, not the old land of song, that was to have the privilege of furnishing the cradle and home for the rearing of the new prodigy. How this came about must now be told.

In the early forties New York was fond of flirting with opera. Its citizens still preserved the taste for it that the incomparable Garcias had some twenty years before inoculated them withal. But their support was rather capricious, and when, in the winter of 1843–4, a *ci-devant* restaurant-keeper named Palmo, built a small opera house in Chambers Street, in which to give Italian opera on a modern scale (it only held eight hundred persons), he found it more than he could do to make it pay. The first season saw him a heavy loser; the second was disastrous. In January, 1845, the theatre closed and was taken over by one Sanquirico, a *buffo* singer—but not alone. It occurred to this enterprising artist to ask his old friend Salvatore Patti to come over to New York and join himself and another Italian named Pogliagno in the exploitation of Palmo's opera house.

The Pattis do not appear to have hesitated. Sanquirico used powerful arguments, and the economy of the arrangement was a recommendation in itself. The husband a tenor; the wife a prima donna; two of the Barili children already old enough to be in the company—it was like securing the best part of a troupe, to begin with. The important step was quickly taken, and, almost before they knew it, Salvatore

Patti and his family were landing on the dock at New York, ready to start their new lives in a new country.[1]

The exact date of this emigration to America is not on record. According to Mr. H. E. Krehbiel,[2] the Sanquirico-Patti season at Palmo's came subsequently to the closing of the house in January, 1845. On the other hand, an article printed in *Harper's Weekly Journal of Civilization* in 1860 asserts that Adelina Patti's parents brought her to America in 1844; and there are reasons for concluding that this was the actual year. It is more than likely that Sanquirico was able to foresee and inform his friend in good time how things were going to end at Palmo's.

The idea of living in the United States was exceedingly attractive to the Sicilian tenor; still more so was the anticipation that when his voice gave out he could make a good living as an impresario. It seems practically certain, therefore, that by the time the crisis came at the little opera house in Chambers Street, Salvatore Patti and his family were already permanently installed in their new dwelling, not far from that spot.

But neither there nor elsewhere was his venture into the domain of operatic management destined to be crowned with good fortune. The season at Palmo's was a failure. Nothing daunted, Messrs. Sanquirico and Patti undertook, in 1847, the direction of the newly erected Astor Place Opera House, which seated eighteen hundred people and was intended to accommodate the aristocracy of New York. For a time all went well, and the operas mounted during the season included Verdi's "Ernani" and "Nabucco," Mercadante's "Il Giuramento," Bellini's "Beatrice di Tenda," and Donizetti's "Lucrezia Borgia."

[1] According to one account, Amalia and Carlotta Patti were left behind and placed in a boarding-school at Milan.

[2] "Chapters of Opera," by H. E. Krehbiel, 1909.

Before the end, however, troubles arose (of the usual pecuniary description), for which the easy-going Salvatore was in no way responsible; and eventually the new managers gave way to a Mr. Edward Fry (brother of the then critic of the *Tribune*), who directed the Astor Place opera season in 1848, and afterwards in turn retired in favor of his conductor, Mr. Max Maretzek. The advent of this gentleman was of interest for reasons that will become apparent later on. He was to devote himself to the cause of Italian opera in New York for the next five-and-twenty years, and with more satisfactory results than had attended the efforts of his predecessors.

Thus terminated the vocation of Salvatore Patti as an operatic manager. Who knows but that it was for the best? Had fortune smiled upon him, the whole history of his remarkable family would probably have been different. His daughters might never have become professional singers, and the wondrous Adelina might have blossomed into—a brilliant amateur.

As it was, the performances during that season of 1847 at the Astor Place Opera House were to shed a strange and lasting influence upon the mind and disposition of the future diva. She was then only four years old, but, as she herself will tell us, she was taken to the opera every night her mother sang. Can we not picture her, a raven-haired child, gazing at the stage with her sparkling black eyes, taking in every feature of the scene, listening with wide-open ears to the singers, and drinking in, for the first time, the Italian melodies that were to come to her as naturally as speech? What an education for a baby! How little did the father and mother dream what they were doing—what germs of precious talent and vocal genius they were nurturing—when they took that little girl to the theatre, instead of leaving her at home in bed!

But the story of Adelina Patti's childhood is an extraordinary one, and far too important to be started at the end of a chapter.

CHAPTER II

Childhood in New York (1847–50)—Home Life and Influences—The Patti Sisters Amalia and Carlotta—A Vocal Nest—Little Adelina's Voice—Discovery of the Prodigy—An Autobiographical Fragment—Her Musical Ear and Imitative Faculty—Arditi's Visit with Bottesini—Tears of Emotion

AMONG the influences that go to the forming of character and the development of artistic tendencies, none are stronger than those derived from home surroundings. In the case of Adelina Patti it would be difficult to overestimate their potency. From the time she was old enough to "take notice," music was the all-pervading atmosphere of her daily existence. Almost as soon as she could babble words she could warble tunes.

Never before, surely, was there such a musical, or rather such a vocal ménage. From morn till night this Patti dwelling resounded with the echoes of operatic study, with the practice of scales, trills, and cadenzas. To the ears of the youngest member of the family there must have come a continuous outpouring of Italian *cantilena* from the throats of father and mother, brothers and sisters. Like the Joey Ladle of Dickens, she must have literally "taken it in at the pores." Dolls and singing were her chief delights.

Let us glance briefly at the individual members of the household. The parents we already know. By the year 1849 their singing days were nearly over; they were beginning to look to the elder sons and daughters for help to meet the growing family expenses. Ettore, the eldest of the Barili boys, had begun his vocal training before they left Italy. He was now a highly promising baritone, capable of earning something on

his own account. Both of the younger brothers also had good voices—Antonio a deep bass, Nicolo a *basso cantante*.

Their sister, Clotilda Barili, had been for some time on the concert platform, having sung in public before the family emigrated. She appeared once at Vicenza in the very year Adelina was born; and the occasion is noteworthy because it was at a concert given by a young pianist named Maurice Strakosch —the man who was destined to become the brother-in-law and impresario (or, as we should now say, manager) of the illustrious singer. It was at this same concert, moreover, that Strakosch and Salvatore Patti first become acquainted.[1]

Amalia, the eldest of the three Patti girls, also sang in public at an early age. She is said to have had a fine organ, but, unlike her sisters, had to work hard to attain whatever facility she possessed. The shake gave her no end of trouble. She devoted so much time to it, practising two notes slowly up and down, in order to get them perfectly even, that at last her prolonged study of this one thing attracted the attention of the observant Adelina, now some five or six years old. "Why do you do it like that?" she demanded of Amalia, at the same time imitating her laborious effort. "Why don't you trill this way?" Whereupon the tiny maid executed without difficulty a faultless natural shake. Unstudied and unprepared, it came to her, she said, as "a gift from heaven."[2]

According to Maurice Strakosch, Amalia was already a favorite with American audiences in 1848, when, escaping the revolutionary troubles in Paris, he crossed the Atlantic and gave a "festival," as he termed it, in New York in October of that year, for which the Patti opera troupe was engaged. But Amalia was then only about twelve and without reputation as a

[1] "Souvenirs d'un Impresario," Maurice Strakosch, Paris, 1887.

[2] I heard Mme. Patti tell this story herself more than once at Craigy-Nos Castle, and have related it in my "Thirty Years of Musical Life in London" (New York: The Century Co.; and London: W. Heinemann, 1903).

prodigy; and, as the new-comer was immediately smitten with her charms (so much so that he married her two years later), his evidence regarding the young lady's popularity must be received, like many other of his "Souvenirs"—above all when dates are concerned—with the greatest caution.

The matter of Amalia's public career is, however, of no particular moment. It lasted a comparatively brief space. Soon after her marriage her voice began to lose its power, and in a few years it had gone almost entirely.

With Carlotta Patti, the second daughter, it was exactly the reverse. Her fine high soprano voice did not develop until she reached womanhood, and she remained a famous concert singer for more than twenty years. But of her more anon. At the period now referred to Carlotta was a girl of eight, learning to play the piano and working hard at her Clementi and Czerny. Later she was to study to be a professional pianist, with the well-known virtuoso, Henri Herz, for her master. Thus her unfortunate lameness did not prevent her from adding appreciably to the aggregate of sweet sounds produced by this extraordinary family.

Lastly, there was the merry, raven-haired, pert little *enfant gâtée* herself, divided between her passion for dolls and her love of music, imitating every singer and repeating every note she heard, from an Italian aria to a Southern plantation ditty, taking it all in and giving it all out again in that sweet child soprano which, it is said, her mother took an especial delight in encouraging.

But the "entire *Stimmung* of the Patti household," to quote Hanslick again, was singularly calculated to foster the growth of an incipient vocal genius. What a nest wherein to rear the infant nightingale who was to be the greatest songstress of them all! It was when she was nearly six years old that they first began to notice the exquisite timbre of Adelina's voice, its bright, clear tone, the unusual accuracy of her ear,

the sureness and ease with which she would phrase a melody.

A graceful and vivacious child she was at this time. Her pretty face, when in repose, had in it a strangely mature, often thoughtful look. Its contour was almost that of a woman's; its expression, when it lighted up, full of character and energy. The dark eyes could sparkle with mischief or quickly blaze with the fire of momentary anger. But then, she was the baby; her ways were very winning; she was so unlike ordinary little girls, save in her aforesaid devotion to her dolls, and, perhaps, a *penchant* for pretty frocks.

A simple tune or a broad strain of melody, given out by the human voice, would instantly rivet her attention. For instrumental music she did not then betray much liking, though the fact that it was music at all sufficed to make it attractive to her. But her chief joy lay in opera and everything connected with it—the singing, the acting, the dresses, the make-up, the scenic effects, the chorus and orchestra—including the whole personnel, from the conductor to the call-boy. Nor was there a single thing done upon the stage that she would not or could not mimic.

Another year slipped by—a year of diminishing prosperity, of growing care and worry for Adelina's father. Then, in what was perchance their darkest hour, came the incident that was to reveal the means for present relief, and with it, incidentally, the unfolding of a talent that was to astonish the world. I give the story as it was told me more than forty years afterward by the heroine herself.

She was barely seven. Every member of the family and not a few of their friends knew that Adelina could sing; but what they did not know was that she could already, without having had a lesson in her life, sing like an artist.

One day they thought they would make her go through a whole piece, and, in order to see her the better, they made her

stand upon a table. She began without hesitation, not knowing the meaning of the word nervousness. They had no idea what she was going to sing. Imagine their wonder, not unmingled with amusement, when she started the long sustained note and "turn" that form the initial phrase of "Casta diva"! It was to be nothing less, if you please, than that most exacting of arias—the noblest of Bellini's inspired melodies—the sublime prayer uttered by *Norma* just before she severs the sacred mistletoe from an oak with her golden sickle.

Amusement at the little singer's daring quickly disappeared and left a feeling of amazement. For even to those of her flesh and blood who listened there was something strange, exciting, uncanny, in the marvellous intuition that enabled her to go through both verses of "Casta diva" wholly by ear and without a mistake. Is it surprising that the good Salvatore and his wife should have wept tears of joy over their darling *bambino?* If the father's eyes had not been opened before, they were now. Adelina was a real prodigy, and one that might help them out of all their troubles.

That she should know the air was not astonishing. *Norma,* as we have reason to remember, was one of her mother's favorite parts, and the child had often heard her sing it at the Astor Place Opera House. Besides, Clotilda Barili and Amalia were constantly practising it. No; the marvel lay in two things: the singularly mature and beautiful quality of the voice; and the no less surprising grace, accuracy, and charm of the rendering. Her abnormal imitative gift enabled her not only to learn every bar, every *fioritura,* every note and syllable of the Italian music and text by heart, but to control her tone, to sustain it without effort through the long *cantilena,* and to deliver the phrases just as she had heard them sung, with natural expression and balanced suavity of style.

Herein was something that the father knew to be more than an ordinary child's performance. It was the revelation of the

born singer. It was the bringing to light of the true vocal genius—a kind of super-woman of the singing universe—in whom the lives, habits, and dispositions of this family had (for two generations at least) been preparing and building up a wonderful manifestation. Happily for every one, the "discovery" was not to lead to an overworking of the gold mine. The resources of the juvenile artist were not to be abused, but, on the contrary, carefully guarded and preserved from now onward. They were to develop with the normal growth of the girl and the woman, and to serve her in good stead throughout a career that was as unexampled for its duration as for its distinction.

The events leading to this "discovery" were also related [1] by the great artist to her Viennese critic and friend (in May, 1877) in course of the following interesting description of her childhood in America:

"A musical ear, as well as an aptitude for and great love of singing, was developed in me at an extremely early age. Even as a little child, I was madly fond of music and the stage. I went to the opera every evening my mother appeared; every melody, every action, was impressed indelibly on my mind. When, after being brought home, I had been put to bed, I used to quietly get up again, and, by the light of the night-lamp, play over all the scenes I had witnessed in the theatre. A cloak of my father's, with a red lining, and an old hat and feathers belonging to my mother, did duty as an extensive wardrobe, and so I acted, danced, and twittered—barefooted but romantically draped—all the operas. No, not even the applause and the wreaths were wanting; I used to play audience as well, applauding and flinging myself nosegays, which I manufactured by no means clumsily out of large newspapers crumpled up together.

1 "Musikalische Stationen."

"A heavy blow now overtook us. The manager became a bankrupt, and disappeared without paying the arrears of salary. The company dispersed, and there was an end to Italian opera. My parents found themselves without the means of livelihood. We were a numerous family, and so want and anxiety quickly made their appearance. My father took one thing after another to the pawnbrokers, and frequently did not know one day how we were to live the next. I, however, understood but little of this, and sang away merrily early and late.

"My father now began to observe me, and conceived the notion that with my childish voice I might extricate the family from their distress. Thank heaven, I did. When I was seven years old I had to appear as a concert singer, and I did so with all the delight and simplicity of a child. In the concert-room I was placed on a table near the piano, so that the audience might see as well as hear the little bit of a doll. People flocked in, and there was plenty of applause. And do you know what I sang? That is the most remarkable part of the business; nothing but *bravura* airs, such as 'Una voce poco fa,' from the 'Barbiere,' with precisely the same embellishments which I sing at present, and similar florid compositions. I had the joy of seeing the articles of clothing and the valuables which had been pledged find their way back, one by one, and quiet and comfort once more reign in our house."

This interesting bit of autobiography takes us somewhat in advance of our story. It is impossible to assign an exact date to the "discovery," but there can be little doubt that it occurred during the winter of 1849–50. Some time then elapsed before Salvatore Patti was in a position to carry out his idea of bringing out his youngest daughter as a vocal prodigy. In the meantime, however, she was encouraged as

much as possible in the family circle. They constantly put her on the table and made her try over everything she knew,[1] "showing off" her marvellous talent before friends until very soon it became second nature to her to sing before an audience.

Among these friends was one who was to know her intimately in after years. This was the celebrated operatic conductor, Luigi Arditi, who in 1845–50 was touring in the United States with the no less renowned double-bass player and composer, Bottesini. They visited the Patti home in New York, and there, for the first time, saw and heard the enchanting little Adelina. The episode made its mark upon both musicians, and the pen-picture in which it was described by Signor Arditi[2] throws a valuable light upon the personality of the little singer at this momentous period:

"The first time I ever set eyes on Adelina was in New York, when she and her mother visited the hotel at which I lived, in order to eat the macaroni which was always excellently prepared by an Italian chef of renown, and her determined little airs and manners then already showed plainly that she was destined to become a ruler of men. . . . Adelina's mother was anxious that I should hear the child sing, and so she brought her little daughter to my rooms one day.

"Bottesini and I were highly amused to see the air of importance with which the tiny songstress first selected a comfortable seat for her doll in such proximity that she was able to see her while singing, and then, having said: 'Là, ma bonne petite, attends que ta maman te chante quelque chose de jolie,' she demurely placed her music on the piano, and asked me to accompany her in the rondo of 'Sonnambula.'

[1] Including several of the popular old ballads which it was such a delight to hear her sing. Now was probably the time when she first began to learn "Home, sweet home," "The last rose of summer," "Comin' thro' the rye," and "Within a mile o' Edinboro' Town." Anyhow, she sang them all as a child.

[2] "My Reminiscences," by Luigi Arditi. London, 1896.

"How am I to give an adequate description of the effect which that child's miraculous notes produced upon our enchanted senses? Perhaps if I say that both Bottesini and I wept genuine tears of emotion, tears which were the outcome of the original and never-to-be-forgotten impression her voice made when it first stirred our innermost feelings, that may, in some slight measure, convince my readers of the extraordinary vocal power and beauty of which little Adelina was, at that tender age, possessed. We were simply amazed, nay, electrified, at the well-nigh perfect manner in which she delivered some of the most difficult and varied arias without the slightest effort or self-consciousness."

Such was the adorable little creature whom Arditi and Bottesini became acquainted with on the eve, so to speak, of her extraordinary career. Little did they dream then what a privilege was theirs. Still, they wept; and more than that they could not well do to manifest the sensations that the child's singing aroused in them. Nor can we doubt that those kindly tears did more even than words to strengthen the father's resolution in the plan of action which he had determined to pursue.

CHAPTER III

Adelina's First Teachers—Ettore Barili and Signora Paravelli—What They Taught Her—Lilli Lehmann's Tribute—Début as a Wonder-Child—Advent of Maurice Strakosch—First Concert Tour—Ole Bull—Early Vocal Training—Her Own Evidence—The Barili and Strakosch Claims Compared—A Discussion in the *Times*—An Episode of Patti's Childhood.

EXACTLY how old—or rather how young—Adelina Patti was when she began to take lessons can only be surmised. Her own records of the matter mention no date.[1] She simply says: "While still a little child I had lessons in singing from my step-brother, and pianoforte lessons from my sister Carlotta." It is more than probable that these lessons were started immediately after the "discovery" chronicled in the preceding chapter.

Anyhow, it is absolutely certain that Ettore Barili, "an excellent singer," was her first teacher. "He gave me my first lessons in singing, doing so quite systematically, and not as a mere amusement or by fits and starts."

"It was my half-brother, Mr. Ettore Barili," she once told an American writer, "who laid the foundation of my singing. My brother-in-law, Mr. Strakosch, taught me certain embellishments and cadenzas, but it was to Ettore Barili that I owed the foundation as well as the finish of my vocal equipment. With him I studied solfeggi, trills, scales; the chromatic scales came naturally. I think I was trilling when I came into the world."[2]

1 "Musikalische Stationen," Eduard Hanslick.

2 From an article by William Armstrong, quoted later at length, which appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* (Philadelphia), August 8, 1903, under the heading "Madame Patti's Advice to Singers," and now reprinted by permission.

She also received vocal instruction in those early days from an Italian opera singer named Paravelli, who visited regularly at the house and was an intimate friend of the family. This lady was desirous of taking in hand Adelina's general education, and her offer was accepted.

Signora Paravelli seems to have been an efficient accompanist as well as a capable singer. Consequently, under her guidance the child was able to make rapid progress. She added a number of operatic arias and show pieces to her own little stock, her memory being as phenomenal as was her faculty for imitation. At the same time she gained notably in poise and *aplomb*. No matter who was listening, she never betrayed a scintilla of self-consciousness, but sang as a bird would—with the keenest sense of enjoyment and freedom in the act of using her voice and warbling her melodies.

Did she go through a regular course of technical training in the art of voice-production? This question has been asked a thousand times, and the answer she herself always emphatically gave was, "No!" Nature had taught her nearly everything that the average student has to strive laboriously to acquire. To put it still more precisely, she went through no regular course, but was carefully trained to do everything well.

Both Ettore Barili and Signora Paravelli seem to have acted in this matter with the utmost common sense. They merely filled in the gaps that nature had left. They taught her how to breathe, how to sustain tone with what Italians call the *messa di voce* (swelling and diminishing on single notes), how to execute scales and runs—in fact, all the exercises for agility, the ornaments and embellishments, that form the foundation of the old Italian school.

Happily, too, they "let well alone." (And would that all who teach this art would do the same!) They made no attempt to interfere with her manner or method of emitting her

voice. Its delicious purity and extraordinary volume furnished a sufficient warning against any attempt to improve upon what they must have recognized as nature's perfect model. They doubtless realized that she was a genius—one of those "fortunately gifted geniuses in whom are united all the qualities needed to attain greatness and perfection, and whose circumstances in life are equally fortunate; who can reach the goal earlier, without devoting their whole lives to it."[1]

The accomplished artist who wrote the words just quoted understood the nature of this phenomenon. Referring to it again, Mme. Lilli Lehmann says: "She possessed, unconsciously, as a gift of nature, a union of all those qualities that all other singers must attain and possess consciously. Her vocal organs stood in the most favorable relation to each other. Her talent, and her remarkably trained ear, maintained control over the beauty of her singing and of her voice. The fortunate circumstances of her life preserved her from all injury. The purity and flawlessness of her tone, the beautiful equalization of her whole voice, constituted the magic by which she held her listeners entranced."

Once more, then, all praise to Ettore Barili for his masterly policy of non-interference! Taking his little step-sister in hand at the tender age when a fundamental mistake or a suspicion of undue "forcing" might have ruined her organ, he trained her with the utmost gentleness and discrimination. The more she sang, the better she sang. She never complained of the slightest fatigue. If she left off singing it was because they stopped her, or because she wanted to get back to her dolls.

Such was the wonder-child of seven whom Salvatore Patti desired to bring to the world's notice in the early spring of 1850. His mind made up, he knew quite well to whom to

[1] "How to Sing," by Lilli Lehmann. London, 1903.

apply to coöperate with him in the execution of his plan. No one was likely to do better than Max Maretzek, his old conductor at the Astor Place Opera House in 1847, and subsequently the manager of that establishment. So in due course he went to Maretzek and asked him to hear his little girl sing. Of course Max did so.

To the last day he lived, the New York impresario was never so proud of anything as of his share in that transaction. Delighted beyond measure with Adelina's precious gifts, he promised that she should appear at a concert that was about to be given under his direction for a charity. It was an excellent opportunity, and arrangements for the début were forthwith concluded. Of the actual date on which it occurred no reliable record is to be found. The affair had no importance at the time, and it is doubtful whether it was noticed in the press beyond the extent of a paragraph.

Nevertheless, certain details survive. For instance, that the concert took place in a small New York building known as Tripler's Hall; and that "little Miss Patti" sang on this memorable occasion two pieces, namely the final rondo, "Ah! non giunge," from "La Sonnambula," and the "Echo Song" by Eckert, which was then one of the *chevaux de bataille* of Jenny Lind. Her rendering of these selections—standing upon a table, that the audience might be able to see her well—created a most extraordinary sensation.

Regarding this impression I have listened to the evidence of an eye-witness. In 1902, not long after the beginning of my seven years' sojourn in New York, I presented a letter of introduction (it was from Mme. Patti herself) to a lady who told me she had been among the audience at the Tripler's Hall concert.

"Never shall I forget," she said, "the perfect coolness and equanimity with which that child stood before a staring crowd, for the first time in her life, and sang with astounding ease

and grace the different pieces that they had put her down for! The beauty of the fresh young voice was thrilling enough, but the brilliancy of her execution was something the like of which people had never heard from the lips of a girl before; and the combination simply took their breath away. I certainly thought they would never leave off applauding. We left the hall with the feeling that Mr. Maretzek, [a relative of the speaker], had discovered the greatest vocal prodigy of the age."

And so he had; but at the moment he seems not to have realized the fact. Anyhow, Max Maretzek was not destined to be the man who should profit by it. The gains to be harvested through the golden throat of Adelina were to be shared by Salvatore Patti for many a day in association with his lucky son-in-law, Maurice Strakosch.

Concerning this clever and wide-awake young musician, who had not been long married to Amalia, the eldest of the Patti girls, it will now be necessary to give a few particulars. His age in 1850 was twenty-five. Born in a small town in Moravia,[1] he was brought up as a pianist, made his début when eleven years old, and won considerable fame in Austria and Germany. He aspired, however, to be an operatic tenor, and sang for a year at Agram for thirty francs a month! After that he was fortunate enough to secure a chance of studying for a while under the great Mme. Pasta, who had retired from the stage and was then living on the Lake of Como.

Strakosch says he studied with Pasta three years, but this has been contradicted on good authority. Whether he did or did not matters little, except as a test of his veracity. The point is that his "Souvenirs" teem with doubtful statements

1 In his book he mentions neither the year nor the name of the town. But the latter was not Lemberg, as has been stated.

and leave a series of *lacund* which, had they been truthfully filled in, would have furnished material of the utmost value and interest. The accuracy of the assertion that he was three years with Pasta is at once impugned by his boast, in the same sentence, that he was "learning that science which enabled him in turn to form a pupil like Mme. Adelina Patti." How much he had to do with "forming" of the famous singer will be shown in due time.

In any case, the privilege of being taught at all by Pasta—the renowned soprano for whom Bellini wrote "La Sonnambula" and "Norma"—does not seem to have fitted Maurice Strakosch for his coveted operatic career. He abandoned the idea, resumed work as a solo pianist, and, after winning further success in that capacity, made his way (as already stated) to the hospitable shores of America and the susceptible heart of Amalia Patti.[1] There it was not all quite plain sailing; for his prospective mother-in-law strongly objected to the match and very nearly succeeded in preventing it. The father, however, proved less awkward to manage. He liked Maurice Strakosch from the first, and their long family and business relations appear to have always existed on a mutually satisfactory footing.

Thus, at the moment when the possibilities, pecuniary and otherwise, of little Adelina's prodigious talent stood fully revealed at Tripler's Hall on the day of the charity concert, Amalia's newly wedded husband had just returned from a two years' tour of the States. Whether he was present at the concert he does not state. He merely mentions that the child "made a sensation," and adds that she was *eight* years old—a mistake arising from his impression (never altered, by the way) that she was born in 1842.

Yet Maurice Strakosch must either have been on the spot

[1] Mme. Maurice Strakosch lived during the later years of her life in Paris, and died there December 16, 1915, at the age of seventy-seven.

or very near at hand; for immediately after the début we find him proposing to undertake the management of an extended provincial tour, with Adelina as the "star." The expenses were to be kept as low as possible, so that, at the outset at any rate, the uniform price of half a dollar might be charged for seats. The arrangements were quickly completed, and late in the spring of 1850 the tour, which was to last for nearly three years, made a start at Baltimore.

Now was witnessed a strange spectacle—strange even for the land of Barnum and (as it was then) the paradise of showmen! A child of some seven summers was to inaugurate her unparalleled career by visiting every town worth going to in every Eastern, Middle, and Southern State of the Union; to stand upon a table every night for astonished multitudes to gaze upon and listen to; looking, perchance, like a delicate, fragile piece of Dresden china, but singing with the moving appeal, the executive brilliancy, of a very wonderful little human being—in all vocal attributes a woman long before her time.

At the opening concert at Baltimore[1] only one hundred persons paid for their seats. But the hundred went away amazed—and talked. At the second concert the total rose to three hundred; and so the tale grew until, at the sixth, every seat had been sold before the doors opened. The room was capable of holding two thousand people, so the receipts mounted quickly and the prospects of the tour became very rosy indeed.

At this juncture Strakosch came across an old friend, Ole Bull, the Norwegian violinist, who was also paying Baltimore a visit. For once the latter had noted a falling-off in business. "What is the cause?" he asked. "Little Miss

[1] The date is not on record, but it must have been in the autumn of 1850.

Patti,'' they told him—the phenomenal child soprano. Ole Bull went to hear her, and instantly perceived that there would be wisdom in converting so powerful a competitor into a partner. As a matter of fact, it was Strakosch who proposed the deal. Ole Bull accepted, and the joint tour began without delay.

The Norwegian was a virtuoso of the Paganini school. Exceedingly popular in the United States, he was just the right kind of attraction to make the ensemble irresistible. It did splendidly. Month after month, year after year, the sweet little singer and the bluff Scandinavian fiddler went on traveling through the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Cuba, revisiting most of the larger towns and cities, and making money everywhere.

They got on well together, for Adelina had an affectionate disposition in spite of her caprices and her occasional displays of temper. One of these (related by Strakosch) was quite characteristic of her. She had a decided liking for champagne. Ole Bull, her neighbor at *table d'hôte*, thought fit on one occasion to refuse to give her any. Another child would have cried. Adelina adopted her own method of showing her annoyance. With her pretty little hand she administered a sharp smack to the cheek of the astonished violinist.

Again, one day at Cincinnati, she asked Strakosch to get her a doll. He paid no particular attention to her request and forgot all about it. When the concert was about to begin, Adelina declared that she would not sing unless she had her doll. The hall was crowded; but nothing could alter her decision—nothing but the doll. The manager was compelled to run out and buy one at the nearest toy store. When it was handed to her, Miss Patti dried her tears, then ran on to the platform and created the usual enthusiasm.[1]

She was like most little girls of her age, apart from her

[1] "Souvenirs of an Impresario," by Maurice Strakosch.

singing and her exceptional facility for speaking languages. At this time she could converse with equal fluency in English, Italian, Spanish, and French; later in life she added to these German and some knowledge of Russian. The thunders of applause and the personal attentions evoked by her juvenile achievements never turned her head. She took them for granted, and then, as thereafter, would no doubt have wondered greatly if they had not been forthcoming.

The fact that she had begun to earn large sums of money made no difference whatever to her.[1] She remained true to her dolls and playthings, and "enjoyed the companionship of the children whom she met at the different hotels. She had often to be taken away from her games to practise her scales and exercises; which," observes her manager, "he was very particular that she should not be allowed to neglect."

Here the question fittingly arises, what part did Maurice Strakosch take, both during and immediately after this lengthy tour, in the vocal education of Adelina Patti?

The point is of importance, because in after years Strakosch put forward a definite claim to be her "first and only master." This was met by Mme. Patti with a no less unqualified denial.[2]

When Hanslick put the question to her point-blank in 1877, she answered: "Certainly not. Strictly speaking, Strakosch taught me only *Rosina* in 'Il Barbiere,' and subsequently,

[1] According to an article in *Harper's Weekly*, when this tour ended Adelina Patti's share of the profits amounted to twenty thousand dollars, "which her father invested in a country seat, the summer residence of the family."

[2] On this subject Kuhe says in his "Reminiscences": "I spoke just now of Adelina Patti's brother-in-law as her singing master. But did she ever require one? I maintain that Adelina Patti would still have been all that she was thirty years ago, and is now, even if no one had trained her in voice production—scales, shakes, and all the other departments of vocal tuition. In her all accomplishments of that kind were inborn."

when I was travelling about Europe as a regular singer, he went through my characters with me.'' On the other hand, although the Strakosch claim was excessive, it ought not to be dismissed as utterly groundless. Let us endeavor to arrive at the truth.

He was, of course, neither her ''first'' nor her ''only'' teacher. The first, as we know, was Ettore Barili, who was, moreover, to teach her again after she had returned home to New York. But it will be readily perceived that, during a concert tour extending over three years, the little Adelina's répertoire of pieces must have needed occasional replenishment. No matter how regularly she might practise scales and exercises, she could hardly be expected to continue picking up arias and ballads ''by ear'' during the whole tour without some sort of individual instruction.

The arias that she sang in public during the period under discussion included several that had been made familiar in America by Jenny Lind, Henrietta Sontag, Bosio, and other shining lights of the vocal firmament. Those that she learned during the long peregrination from town to town she can have studied with no other person than Maurice Strakosch. He, likewise, must have tried over with her the popular ballads she is said to have ''warbled so deliciously to English words.'' Her father never gave her a singing lesson in his life.

Maurice Strakosch was sufficiently well equipped for the task. He had had lessons from Pasta and heard her teach. He had listened to most of the famous singers of his time. He was well acquainted with the principles and traditions of the old Italian school. True, he was not a recognized *maestro di canto*. But who, at any period of musical history, has ever required a special certificate to entitle him to be called a teacher of singing? If the gentleman had not ''protested too much'' he would have been credited with more.

What he could show to the quick-eared Adelina in the way of adornments, variations, cadenzas, and all the elaborate ornamentation essential for the operatic *morceaux* of that time, she would doubtless learn with her customary facility. How he managed to show her the proper pronunciation of the words in the ballads is not quite so evident. He had an accent that you could "cut with a knife," and, had she reproduced it then as she mimicked it in after years, the people would have gone into fits of laughter.

Strakosch, it would seem, had an idea much later in life that he could teach English oratorio with all the purity of accent which he had admired in Lemmens-Sherrington and Sims Reeves. His ambition was to make a great Handelian singer of Mme. Patti, and, according to her own graphic description, this is how he would have had her pronounce the words of the air "Thou didst blow with the wind," from "Israel in Egypt":

> "Zou dids' blow, viz-ze-vint;
> Dey zank, ass lett in-de-mighty-vatters," etc.

Needless to say, her ear was far too sensitive—English being practically her mother-tongue—for her seriously to imitate this kind of accent in the songs she learned as a child. When she grew up and came to live in England, her pronunciation of the language, if not free from Americanisms, very quickly improved. She occasionally sang a song in the vernacular, to the great delight of British and American audiences; but, beyond appearing at some of the Handel Festivals, and filling the Centre Transept of the Crystal Palace with penetrating birdlike tones, she evinced no desire to shine as a singer of oratorio.

How much or how little she acquired from Strakosch it is not now easy to state. If he incurred the punishment of being denied credit for what he actually did, the fault was his own. He paid the penalty for grasping at all the honors. His

bump of "love of approbation," as the phrenologists term it, was a great deal too large. In his "Souvenirs" he does not even mention the name of Ettore Barili! He spares a passing word for Signora Paravelli, but merely to say that she "took great pleasure in making Adelina sing to her accompaniments."[1] His one glimpse of modesty is when he limits his sole pedagogic activities to a period of about ten years. It was his privilege, he says, to be for "plus de dix années le seul professeur et impresario d'Adelina Patti."

But there were other claimants besides Maurice Strakosch to the honor of being Patti's teacher. The question arose in the columns of the *Times* in September, 1884, in consequence of a remark made by Dr. Franz Hueffer, who had not long succeeded James Davison as the musical critic of that paper. The correspondence[2] excited some interest—chiefly on account of Strakosch's reply, which, by the way, is mentioned in the meagre account of Patti given in the revised edition of Grove's Dictionary.

These various claims, however, were of an extremely shadowy kind. No doubt several of her conductors performed the more or less mechanical duty of "coaching" Patti in certain of the operas she sang under their batons; and the fact that she rarely, if ever, attended a rehearsal rendered this peculiarly essential. But coaching and teaching are two widely different functions. The present writer did not call himself one of Mme. Patti's "teachers" because he once had the privilege of helping her to master the original text of some Wagner pieces—the only German, by the way, that she ever sang in public.

There is plenty of evidence that she was a child with a

[1] True, he also mentions that she taught her to read and write. Presumably, therefore, Signora Paravelli was responsible for that exquisitely neat Italian hand which always aroused the admiration of Mme. Patti's correspondents.

[2] See Appendix A.

ADELINA PATTI AT THE AGE OF NINE
From a daguerreotpye

mind of her own; that she was something more than the mere ordinary little girl with a precocious vocal gift. Her wilfulness and her occasional fits of temper quickly subsided under soothing and kindly treatment. And of this there was no lack, for every one but her father spoiled her. Yet she was not exactly a "spoilt child." If her nature was to fight for her own way, she was *au fond* obedient; and even at this tender age she seems to have had an extraordinary realization of her duty as an artist. It was enough for her to know that certain things were forbidden because they might injure her voice or were not good for her singing. She would grumble, perhaps, but immediately yield.

It is not difficult to visualize her expressive Italian face at the age of nine or ten. Happily, there is the now well-known photograph (which she lent to the writer for reproduction as a frontispiece to his book "Thirty Years of Musical Life") taken of her seated at a table between two of her youthful friends, who have been eliminated from the picture. What a remarkable little face it is! How sedate and calm, how full of thought and contemplation, how strangely mature for her years! Yet it is not sad. It bears only that quiet, serious expression, already natural to her, which she ever wore when face to face with the camera. The most photographed woman of her time, there is not extant a picture of her that shows her fine teeth or the smallest semblance of an artificial smile. And yet her smile when her countenance lit up with animation—most of all when she was singing—was one of her greatest charms.

Another picture (in words, this one) of the child Adelina has, by a fortunate chance, come into the writer's possession. It appeared in an American magazine nearly forty years ago, with some quaint pencil illustrations that unquestionably enhance the value of the story, the authenticity of which (having regard to the source whence it came, if for no other

reason) there is not the smallest ground for doubting. The excerpt bears date "March, 1881," and from that time to this has probably never appeared in print. It throws a profoundly interesting light upon the character of our heroine at this concert epoch of her juvenile career, and is therefore reproduced here in its entirety:

RECOLLECTIONS OF A LITTLE PRIMA DONNA

By Augusta de Bubna

A number of years ago, certain placards and programs, posted and distributed upon the walls and streets of a small Southern city, heralded the coming of a wonderful entertainment.

Among the artists announced upon the glaring red, yellow, and blue bills there were two old and renowned names—Ole Bull, the celebrated violinist, and Maurice Strakosch, the brilliant pianist; but the largest and leading letters spelled out the name of the youngest and tiniest member of the concert troupe: "Mademoiselle Adelina Patti; Aged Eleven Years. The Wonderful Child Prima Donna!"

Tickets for the grand concert sold very rapidly, and there was every promise that a crowded house would welcome to the town the young singer and her veteran companions.

Adelina Patti and Ole Bull Welcome Their Visitors

The day was dreary and dismal; a sullen spring rain set in during the morning, and gave evidence of lasting many hours.

Upon the arrival of the troupe at the hotel, the business manager, together with Mr. Strakosch, came over to the music store in the place to see about the sale of seats and tickets, and, while here, the pleasant musician discovered, playing behind the counter with their dollies, two little blonde-haired lassies.

He felt at once he would find relief for the dreariness of a whole day indoors for his sister-in-law, whom he had left already fretting and petulant.

He consequently at once made gentle advances toward acquaint-

anceship, by telling the two maidens about the lonely little girl over at the hotel, who was counting rain-drops on the window-panes, and begging them to come and see the little Adelina. The children's interest was at once awakened. They obtained permission from their parents to visit the little singer, put on clean aprons, and soon, with their dollies in their arms, they skipped along in the rain beside "the greatest living pianist" of the day.

When they reached the hotel and the room where the strange little girl was to be presented, a curious tableau met the eyes of the lassies, and the first sound which they recollect ever hearing from that voice which has since sung "pearls and diamonds," was a merry, tinkling, mocking laugh.

The room was a great, dull, dark place, scantily furnished, and bare of comfort; in the middle of the floor there stood a tall gentleman with long, thick gray hair, his eyes tightly bandaged by the tantalizing sprite whose mocking voice had, for several minutes, led him an elusive dance all about the room.

There was a sudden pause as the door opened. The gentleman pushed up his bandage, and the little girl opened very wide a pair of brilliant dark eyes. Mr. Strakosch came quickly forward, leading the now timid strangers, and said kindly to the famous little singer:

"I have brought you a couple of playmates, Adelina; you will release Ole Bull, now, from his chase of you, and after you have entertained the little girls, you are to go home with them to dine, and play until tea-time."

The little girl came toward the shrinking lassies, smiled in their faces brightly, and then kissed each on both cheeks, in a funny foreign manner.

By this time, too, the tall old gentleman had untied his bandage, and was also beaming down on the little strangers with a gentle, kindly smile, kissing them as well, and saying in a soft, low voice: "It is well for Adelina to have some little ones with whom to play—she tires quickly of us older children. I am too big and tall for her, and I will leave you now to make friends and play together." And he at once walked to the door.

"Now, a Bright, Pleasant Expression, Please!"

But her imperial highness was not of the same mind. On the

contrary, she insisted stoutly that "the more, the merrier," and again the mild blue eyes of the Norwegian were blinded, and down upon his knees knelt the famous artist, to "pick up pins and needles."

At the first symptoms of weariness on the part of the children, however, the kind old gentleman quickly went his way; and the little girls, left alone now, looked gravely at one another, from top to toe, with the curious, animal-like gaze with which newly acquainted children regard each other. Then the lassies offered the new friend their dollies, which had lain upon the table during the game; but such playthings were not in her line. She looked scornfully upon their waxen loveliness, and snubbed the idea of "making believe mamas."

"No," she cried, tossing back her long, blue-black braids. "No; I am going to take your pictures. Come, sit down and allow me to arrange you properly."

Poor child! She had herself been posed and taken so often that she was perfectly familiar with the whole performance. "Hold up your chins. Ah, that is *parfait!* Now, if you please, look this way, —a trifle to the left. So; that is charming, my dears. Now!—a bright, pleasant expression, please." So she went on, as she arranged to her satisfaction her wonder-eyed and very willing little companions. Then, taking a chair, she threw a towel over her little shiny black head, looked at the children through the bars of its low back, and then for the space of a few seconds was invisible. Presently she reappeared, looking very grave and mysterious, turned her back, and then, with an imaginary negative in her little hand, came toward her sitters, asking their opinion of the pictures. Over and over again was this play performed, to an admiring and delighted audience of two, though the actors were sometimes reversed, and the strange little girl herself assumed the part of the sitter, and threw into convulsions of laughter her amused little photographers, by her sudden changes of face and position.

At noon Ole Bull and "Maurice," as the little Adelina familiarly called Mr. Strakosch, returned to the room, and with them came a dark-browed, foreign-speaking gentleman, of whom the child appeared to stand in awe, calling him "Papa" with a more respectful tone than that in which she addressed the other two gentlemen.

ADELINA PATTI AT THE AGE OF TEN

This dark gentleman assisted her in putting on the little hat and sack in which she was to cross the street and accompany her visitors home to dine, tying a handkerchief around her throat, and, in a sharp, severe tone, giving her a command which the lassies supposed meant that she must "be a good girl."

They afterward discovered that his words were really a strict injunction as to what she was *not* to eat at the strange table.

"No, thanks; I *dare* not taste it if there is any pepper in it—Papa would be terribly angry," she said, when helped at table; and then she told how beautifully they cooked macaroni at home, and wished ever so devoutly that she could have some "that very minute," and the lassies felt very badly indeed because a large dish of her favorite food could not be procured at once for their charming little guest.

Playing at Opera—Lucia and Edgardo

After dinner, a few delightful hours were passed in the play-room; and such plays were never enacted before or since. Dishes and dolls were swept aside with scarcely a look; but, spying a little tin sword and belt in one corner of the room, the little "born actress" exclaimed:

"Come, we will play opera. I will be Lucia, you shall be Edgardo. See, with this sword and belt you will look like a man; and you must love me passionately and be killed; and I shall go mad and rave over your dead body."

Then two little lassies were instructed in the art of killing and dying, with stage directions for *entrées* and *exits,* while the little Adelina unbound the glossy, long braids of her blue-black hair, and went "mad and raved" over her lover with the tin sword and belt, who lay dying before her.

Many years after, when the famous prima donna, then but a mere girl, made her début at the Philadelphia Academy of Music, the opera was "Lucia di Lammermoor"; but the *Edgardo* of the play-room sat among the audience,—*not* in a tin sword and belt,—and wondered if there came a recollection to the diva of her childhood's performance in the old play-room.

But to go back to my story. That afternoon was all too short, notwithstanding a full repertoire of operas was gone through with

brilliant effect, and when the summons came for the little Adelina to return to the hotel to prepare for the concert, she was unwilling to obey, protesting forcibly in her pretty, half-broken English, and emphasizing her dislike with shrugs and stamps, and naughty sounding French and Italian words, which made the lassies open their blue eyes, quite shocked at their diva's temper. "Maurice," who was very good-natured, listened laughingly to the tirade, and then compromised by allowing his mistress to take back with her to the hotel her beloved little friends, to see her dressed for the concert.

Oh, the wonder of it! To see the little pink silk robe, with its graduated bands of black velvet and lace, spread out upon the bed, not by a mother's careful touch, but by a father's hand; the tiny boots laced up neatly, and the tumbled locks braided, looped around the little ears adorned with velvet rosettes, and diamonds hung therein; then a pair of kid gloves coaxed on the dark, lithe hands, and by degrees, before their eyes, the lassies beheld their little, frowsy, careless romp of the play-room transformed into a wonderful young lady in silk and jewels—a prima donna.

The Little Prima Donna at the Concert

"Now, be sure to sit in the very *frontest* seat, so I can see you the whole time, and wait for me after the concert is over, so I can kiss you good night, won't you?" she coaxed as the lassies were hurried away to be dressed for the evening.

Was it "Addie," they wondered, when there was handed out upon the stage, to a round of rapturous applause, a little, self-possessed, low-courtesying damsel, who scanned the house with indolent, haughty eyes, until they fell upon the "frontest" seats, and then—ought it to be told of her?—actually winked her recognition, as the bright eyes discovered her playmates of the day looking up in adoration at the marvelous creature before them.

Then, a pause, a prelude, and—was it a lark or a nightingale? "O Luce di quest' Anima," "Carnaval de Venise," "Casta Diva," gushed out of that little brown throat, and the house rocked with applause. It was exquisite, wonderful—that voice—as all the world knows now.

The concert over, a low, sweeping bow, a bright smile, and a quick

little nod toward the front row of seats, and presently a whirl of rose-colored silk came rushing down the aisle, and half of the crowd, remaining behind, beheld a pathetic little tableau.

"We are going away to-night, now, and I never knew it!" cried the child, throwing her arms around her two little friends. "And Maurice says I must say good-bye, and I shall never see you again. Promise me you will never forget me!" And, with a passion of embraces and tears, she repeated over and over: "Promise me you will never, *never* forget me!"

"Never! Never!" came back the sobbing replies. Then a long clinging of dark arms to two white little necks, a hurried snatching away of the tear-stained, tragic little creature, and the carriage whirled away—far away upon the "flood of years"—the much loved and never forgotten little child prima donna.

CHAPTER IV

Girlhood to Womanhood—Last Juvenile Tour with Gottschalk—Operatic Yearnings—Mother and Daughter—Training for the Stage—Strakosch or Muzio?—Ullmann Consents—The Terms—Preparing for the New York Début—The Final Rehearsals—The Great Event—The Criticisms—The Season that Followed.

THE five years that followed upon the close of the first concert tour marked an important period of transition. The immediate object of exploiting the prodigy had been accomplished. From a position of pecuniary difficulty the Patti family had been elevated to one of comparative affluence and comfort. They continued to live in and near New York, and the gifted girl carried out numerous profitable engagements both there and in the large neighboring cities.

From time to time she met various artists of renown, all of whom were much struck by her extraordinary talent and predicted a brilliant future for her. Mme. Sontag told her she "would be one of the greatest singers in the world." Mme. Alboni said that "if she went to Paris she would make a furore." Both predictions were to be fulfilled to the letter.

But before that much was to happen. Now, to begin with, there came the interval during which, by Strakosch's sage advice, it was decided that she should withdraw entirely from the concert-room. This began in the summer or autumn of 1855, at which date Adelina had not quite entered her "teens."[1] The exact duration of the period of absolute rest cannot be stated with certainty. According to Strakosch, she was not to sing again in public until she was fifteen; but there

[1] One of her last appearances as a little girl was at "a grand vocal and instrumental concert in aid of the Hebrew Benevolent Societies," given at Niblo's Saloon, New York, on February 27, 1855.

is evidence that this understanding was not adhered to. Some time during the latter part of 1857 the pianist Louis Moreau Gottschalk was in New York, arranging a tour through the Southern States, to extend to the West Indies. He proposed that Adelina should go with him. She had already profited by her "rest," and her voice was broadening out with every promise of becoming a powerful, resonant organ. Her father did not see any necessity for waiting longer. Gottschalk's offer was accepted and concert work was resumed.

In his letter to the *Times,* already referred to, Strakosch states that this tour lasted two years; in his "Souvenirs" he describes it as a *petite tournée.* In either case, it brought the young singer's juvenile career as a concert artist to a close. When she returned to New York, it was to pave the way for her entrance into the branch of artistic life which it had long been her openly expressed desire and ambition to follow, namely, the operatic stage. How this was accomplished we shall now see.

From the strangely interesting little girl, Adelina had blossomed into a fascinating "maiden of bashful fifteen." "In figure," she has said, "I was still a child. I was small and rather delicate."[1] But her spirit, her ideas, her aspirations, were those of a woman who knew her own mind, and, it may be added, who generally managed to have her own way.

Her notion of becoming a prima donna forthwith did not command unanimous approval in the family circle. They thought her much too young; and, from their point of view, they were undoubtedly right. The ordinary girl of fifteen is often not mature enough to begin regular singing lessons, much less undertake rôles and perform the heavy physical tasks inseparable from an operatic career. Her mother insisted on her learning to make dresses and do all kinds of

1 "Musikalische Stationen," Eduard Hanslick.

needlework. "The voice," she assured her precocious daughter, "is soon lost, and the operatic stage is a most uncertain means of livelihood."[1]

The good lady spoke, alas, from experience! But the considerations that had been very real and definite in her own case did not apply (never, indeed, were to apply) to her youngest daughter; and, if she did not then know, she was very soon to learn that Adelina was no ordinary girl. She had made up her mind to go in for opera, and nothing on earth would stop her. What if the work were hard? It would not be too hard for her, since it would cost her no undue effort or strain either to sing or act. She could do both with such ease and such pure sense of enjoyment that what might be labor to others seemed to her merely recreation.

Her voice was now settling down into a rich, lovely soprano, clear and vibrant as a bell, especially in the head register, which had a range extending easily to the F in *alt*. The tone of the medium was not yet fully developed, but made up in sweetness for what it lacked in power. The timbre and character of the whole organ were singularly mature, distinctive, and individual. It possessed a charm that must even at this time have been strangely haunting.

It was not long after her return from the Gottschalk tour that she began to study rôles—*Lucia, Amina,* and *Rosina* among the first—under the guidance of Ettore Barili. She learned with abnormal rapidity. No one but herself, however, was anxious to hasten her début. There is no evidence to confirm Strakosch's assertion,[2] that her parents were now desirous for her to appear in opera as quickly as possible, or that it required *his* permission to defer the event for another year.[3]

[1] "Musikalische Stationen."

[2] "Letter to the *Times*," see Appendix A.

[3] The following incident (related in the *London Figaro*) took place

To be exact, twelve months did not elapse before it occurred. If, as he states, she was absent for two years with Gottschalk, she must have been nearly sixteen (winter of 1858–9) when she started her operatic training—not fifteen, as he suggests. Allowing that she was ready to come out by the summer of 1859, she did not actually do so until the following November. The intervening period cannot, therefore, have exceeded four or five months, during which were to come the "audition" and the further preparation under the conductor Manzocchi, mentioned hereafter. Once more the worthy Maurice was wrong in his dates.

But what is of greater importance is to glance for a moment at the horizon that was to witness the rising of the new star. Its aspect at this period was assuredly clouded and dark.

Since 1854 the Astor Place Opera House had been replaced by the more commodious Academy of Music, and toward that establishment the eyes of the budding prima donna naturally turned. The régime there of her good friend Max Maretzek had ended in failure; but one of its present managers was no other than Maurice Strakosch, so that, if the

a year before Patti's appearance on the operatic stage. She and her sister Carlotta were present one evening at a party. By some mistake it had been neglected to order a carriage to take the young ladies home. It had been snowing heavily all day. The Misses Patti were in evening attire, their feet protected only by white satin slippers. It was two o'clock in the morning; no convenient way of getting a conveyance; the greater part of the guests had left. What could be done? Finally a gentleman had the ingenious idea of procuring a sleigh which stood before a grocery store at the corner. The Misses Patti, well wrapped in shawls and covered with blankets, got in it. The clothes-lines were fetched, fastened to the sleigh; a number of gentlemen placed themselves in front of it, and drew the ladies to their home in Twenty-second Street, between Ninth and Tenth avenues. This was probably the diva's first triumphal car, and afforded her and those taking part in the occasion great fun and pleasure. "Never," she said afterward, "will I forget this incident, which I look upon as a good omen for my future career."

latter were willing, there ought to be no difficulty about arranging for her début. Strakosch, however, had a senior partner—an impresario named Ullmann—who proved less easy to deal with.[1]

Ullmann was a manager with Barnum-like instincts. He was on the lookout only for European celebrities. In the previous year (1858), while Strakosch was turning his attention to the provinces, Ullmann was exploiting two artists of renown, namely Thalberg, the pianist, and Mlle. Piccolomini, the prima donna whose *Violetta* in "La Traviata" had just won her meteor-like fame in London at Her Majesty's Theatre. Hence, when approached with a proposition to include "little Miss Patti," the American soprano, in his list of artists, his first reply was a blank refusal. "He objected," she told Hanslick afterwards, "to allowing a beginner like me to come out in a leading part in New York; and I would not listen to anything about secondary parts." [2]

But Strakosch, who by this time had immense faith in the abilities of his youthful relative, was not the man to take no for an answer. He went at his partner again and again, and at length, after much persuasion, that individual gave his consent. It was definitely arranged that Adelina should make her appearance at the Academy of Music before the end of the year. Her delight knew no bounds. Eighteen years later she said to her friend Hanslick: "My passion for the stage and my talent had waxed wonderfully. I was thoroughly up in several parts, and I did not know what stage-fright meant." [3]

[1] Mr. H. E. Krehbiel, in his "Chapters of Opera," says that "it was under the co-consulship of Maretzek and Ullmann that Adelina Patti made her début at the Academy of Music." But according to Mme. Patti and her brother-in-law, and also Signor Muzio, the conductor, the joint directors of the opera house were Messrs. Ullmann and Strakosch.

[2] "Musikalische Stationem."

[3] "Musikalische Stationem."

ADELINA PATTI WITH HER FATHER

But in which part should she make this all-important début? The question was no doubt seriously discussed, though Strakosch makes no mention of it. Stranger still, his record of the début itself omits the name of the opera in which it occurred. Strangest of all, he even fails to include it in the otherwise complete list of the operas in which she appeared during that memorable first season.[1]

Why was this? We can arrive at only one conclusion: Strakosch was in the awkward position of having called himself "Patti's first and only master," yet he was not the man who prepared her in the opera wherein she made her début. Either jealousy or diplomacy caused him to maintain silence on this interesting point.

Some mystery envelops the whole situation at this juncture. It is here that Signor Muzio appears upon the scene. He was subsequently to become known as the intimate friend and companion of Verdi, but just now he was the principal conductor at the Academy of Music, New York, and in that capacity was present at the "audition" in the theatre when Adelina Patti endeavored to convince Ullmann that, young as she was ("half-grown girl," as she described herself), she was quite woman and singer enough to make a success in opera. According to his own account, Muzio played a very prominent part in the business.[2]

He declares that it was not Strakosch, but the latter's wife, Amalia Patti, who encouraged the idea of Adelina going on the operatic stage. "Her husband was opposed to it, saying she was too young." But unfortunately this statement differs *in toto* from that made by Mme. Patti to Hanslick. She distinctly tells him that it was Strakosch who "overcame Ullmann's scruples." Be that as it may—and our inclination is to believe the "little lady," as having the better memory

1 "Souvenirs d'un Impresario," pp. 16–17.
2 See Appendix A.

of the two—Signor Muzio also puts forward the claim that he turned the scales in her favor. He was appealed to, he says, and "having heard a single piece sung by her, I decided [*sic*] on the début."

What he really meant, no doubt, was that his opinion decided the question whether she should *then* make her début or not. A quarter of a century had elapsed when the old maestro recalled, with a tone of lofty pride, the episode in which he had taken part, and one can forgive him his extra touch of self-importance. By then he was full of the dread significance of his decision, and probably convinced that but for him the début of Adelina Patti might have been deferred for years, if not for ever!

The salient feature of the affair is that Muzio was the person selected to coach the young soprano in the opera in which she was to make her first appearance, "Lucia di Lammermoor." Study it with him she did—most diligently, too; but the circumstance mattered naught to any one then. It was only in after years, when more than one man was clamoring for the distinction of being called "Patti's teacher," that the question came up.

Hence the jealousy and friction between Strakosch and Muzio and the subsequent correspondence in the *Times.* Muzio, of course, declared that he alone "taught" her the part of *Lucia.* Strakosch was no less positive that he had "altered some passages in which her voice was too severely taxed, and introduced cadenzas which enabled her to employ her marvellous upper register."

Both statements were doubtless founded more or less upon fact. So at that point the present writer is quite content to dismiss the controversy with the award—"honors divided."

During her initial engagement to sing in opera, Adelina

Patti was paid one hundred dollars for each performance. Those, at least, were the terms agreed upon between Salvatore Patti on the one hand and Messrs. Ullmann and Strakosch on the other. But between father and son-in-law there already existed a contract, to extend over five years, by which the latter secured the girl's services at a much lower rate and thus insured himself a handsome margin of profit on her engagements.

If we are to believe his own statement, he would have had to pay her only two thousand francs a month for the first year, three thousand for the second, four thousand francs for the third, and five thousand francs for the fourth and fifth. But immediately after the début this contract was annulled and replaced by another, which remained in force as long as Adelina sang under Strakosch's management. In virtue of the new agreement they simply divided all profits after a liberal deduction for general expenses; which made it, as he truly adds, "much more like a partnership than an exploitation." [1]

Let us return, however, to the preparations for the great event. They involved ceaseless excitement and unremitting hard work. Imagine the effect upon an impressionable and impulsive maiden of sixteen, of being within measurable distance of realizing her long-cherished ambition and blossoming into a real prima donna! No wonder she could "hardly sleep at nights." To superintend the making of the three costumes for the part of *Lucia* was far more exciting to her than would have been the preparation of a bridal *trousseau.* Then, moreover, every day there was the lesson with Muzio.

At length everything was ready. A stage rehearsal with pianoforte was notified. Only people connected with the opera house and one or two intimate friends were allowed to

[1] "Souvenirs d'un Impresario," p. 17.

be present. The whole company was pleased, and none more so than the *Edgardo*, the popular tenor Brignoli.[1]

In due course came the full rehearsal with orchestra. It was felt desirable that this should be regarded as something like a test of the young singer's capacity for satisfying an operatic audience. Accordingly, hundreds of invitations were issued, and the Academy of Music was half filled by a curious and expectant gathering. Several well-known musicians and *habitués* were present. We are told that the fascinating débutante made a genuine sensation. Still, outside the opera house no very notable degree of interest was evinced. There was nothing in the nature of a "rush" at the doors when the night arrived.

That night was the 24th of November, 1859.

In spite of the fact that it was an "off night," few of the leading subscribers were absent, and the house contained a fairly brilliant audience. To some, of course, the new-comer had from her childhood been a familiar figure upon the concert platform. They had already admired her entrancing voice and wondered at her precocious vocal talent. For them the sole question was, has the prodigy gone on in the right way and ripened into a grown artist? The attitude of the audience generally bespoke sympathetic encouragement, unmarked, however, by any artificial display of warmth or the persistent attentions of a friendly *claque*. Such spurious devices were never farther from being needed.

The story of that night of surprise and enthusiasm will best be narrated in this volume by the pens of those who were present.[2] The critics of the *New York Herald* and

[1] Already a favorite with the New York public, who admired and applauded him for many years. Brignoli sang in London later on under Mapleson's management at Her Majesty's; but, although an excellent *Manrico*, his voice was then beginning to show serious signs of wear.

[2] See Appendix B.

Tribune showed discrimination in their praise, but they were obviously not less amazed at the extraordinary powers revealed by "Miss Patti" than the audience whose unbounded delight and frantic applause they faithfully chronicled. They were face to face with a phenomenon that was entirely new. Fortunately, their experience of Italian opera in all its manifestations—from the first visit of the Garcia family to New York thirty-four years before—enabled them to appreciate the marvel that had arisen among them.

One eye-witness, signing himself "S. H.," thus described the event in the *Musical Courier:*

> The house was crowded to excess. Miss Patti's friends and admirers, who were very numerous at that time already, were of course all present and full of hope; but great as their expectations were, they were far surpassed. She took the house by storm; she not only sang as only she can sing, but looked lovely and acted well. Though a little timid at first, she displayed her great dramatic powers in the Mad Scene. She was simply dressed in gray silk trimmed with plaid, looked beautiful and modest; Walter Scott himself could not have imagined a more lovely or fascinating heroine whom he described as the unhappy Bride of Lammermoor. The day after the performance I called to see her; her parlour looked like a flower garden, she had received so many floral tributes she was at a loss where to place them.

Two points stand out clearly in the various criticisms: first, a distinct realization of the fact that a star of the highest magnitude had appeared upon the local horizon—a star worthy, perhaps, to shine side by side with those brilliant orbs which so frequently visited America in quest of gold; secondly, the instant and very natural determination to claim Adelina Patti as a "New York girl," not on the ground of birth (they knew better than that), but by right of domicile, rearing, and education.[1]

[1] Hence, no doubt, the impression which prevailed for many years

The *Herald* writer, in pronouncing the début of Miss Patti "a grand success," and predicting a career for her, further hazarded a belief that the managers of the Academy of Music might find in her "their long-looked-for sensation." He was not far wrong. The rare beauty of her fresh, girlish tones, the exquisite grace and purity of her *cantilena,* the astounding ease and sureness of her vocalization, the unaffected charm and intelligence of her acting, the interest that her natural genius for the stage imparted to this first essay in a terribly hackneyed rôle—all these qualities combined to spur an impressionable public to spontaneous and overwhelming enthusiasm.

Messrs. Ullmann and Strakosch had found their long-looked-for sensation indeed! During the whole of the remainder of their season the Academy of Music was crowded from floor to ceiling every night the youthful prima donna appeared.

Soon, of course, she sang in other operas. And what a list of them for a girl in her first season and as yet barely seventeen years old! After "Lucia" came "La Sonnambula"; next "Il Barbiere di Siviglia" and "I Puritani," for which, by the way, she was "coached" by another of the conductors, Signor Manzocchi. Altogether, it is recorded, she appeared during this memorable initial season in no fewer than fourteen operas! Those not yet named comprised "Don Pasquale," "L'Elisir d'Amore," "Martha," "Don Giovanni," "La Traviata" (a child *Violetta!*) "Il Trovatore" (a dramatic soprano part), "Rigoletto," "Ernani"; "Linda di Chamouni," and, perhaps strangest of all, "Mosè in Egitto."

Such a monumental achievement for a beginner was never known before or since. What an exhibition of genius! what determination to conquer all obstacles—physical, musical, and

that Mme. Patti was actually an American. This impression her love for and gratitude to that country did not, during the early part of her career, make her anxious to remove. In after years it was different.

histrionic alike! Naturally, some of these parts she had already studied; most she had heard sung; but there were others that she had neither studied nor heard. In any case, the amount of labor involved in the preparation of so many operas—the coaching at home and the rehearsals at the theatre, while appearing in public twice and occasionally three times a week—must have been extremely heavy.

But apparently the effort did not impose an undue strain upon this remarkable girl. For even then, as in her maturer years, she demonstrated the possession, in a comparatively *petite*, delicate frame, of a musical organization and a vocal mechanism so exquisitely balanced that, where singing was in question, she never knew the meaning of the word fatigue.

CHAPTER V

Waiting for the "Boom"—Operatic Tours in the United States (1860–61)—Season at New Orleans—A *Valentina* and a *Leonora* at Eighteen—Avoiding Mexico and Trying Cuba—Aspirations toward England—Conditions Then Existing in London—Patti Engaged by Mapleson for E. T. Smith—Arrival and Disappointments—How Covent Garden Became Substituted for Her Majesty's Theatre—The Luck of Frederick Gye—How He Advertised His *Trouvaille*

IN the western hemisphere the fame of the new operatic star spread quickly. It took much longer to traverse the Atlantic. In that respect conditions ruled almost the same half a century ago as now. The advent of a great European singer would quickly become known and talked about in the United States; she might promptly cross the ocean, and, aided by an adequate "boom," begin forthwith to gather in the dollars. On the other hand, a prima donna starting upon her career in America needed greater patience. Had she been a second Jenny Lind, Europe would at that time have evinced no curiosity on the strength of an American reputation.

Salvatore Patti and Maurice Strakosch were well aware of this. Confident now that they had become possessed of a "gold-mine" on a modest scale, they were content to wait. They made up their minds, therefore, to refrain from any attempt to attract offers from European impresarios until "little Lina," as Maurice was wont to call her, had worked for at least another year on American soil. So wait they did, with the results that fully justified their policy. For, even thus, the progress of the Patti triumph in an opposite direction to that of the ordinary solar orbit—namely, from west

to east, instead of from east to west—furnished quite a new and amazing record.

There was plenty of inducement, in a financial sense, to remain for a while in America. Long before the season of 1859–60 at the Academy of Music had reached its close, Strakosch had been inundated with offers of engagement, some of them of the most flattering nature, from all parts of the Union; likewise from Mexico, Cuba, and the West Indies, and even from South America. But in the choice of these offers an important consideration had to be borne in mind; it was necessary that the strength of the young girl should not, through constant singing, be put to too severe a test. And here, again, a wise policy was adopted.

For after New York, in the spring of 1860, they began a tour of the Eastern States so as not to entail the fatigue of long journeys between the various cities. The success achieved everywhere was the same. In Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and other large towns the rush to hear "Miss Patti" was tremendous; and in each instance the New York verdict was overwhelmingly confirmed. Philadelphia was particularly enthusiastic. One of its journals contributed to the vast army of provincial notices that appeared during the tour an example worthy of publication.[1]

After a judicious rest during the hottest summer weeks, the tour was resumed. For Adelina now positively craved for the excitement of appearing in public; and, besides, it was very pleasant to be able to count on full houses, thunders of applause, and a constant flow of dollars into the family exchequer. The next important move, however, took them farther afield.

In the winter of 1860–61 we find the now-accustomed trio—father, daughter, and brother-in-law—in the city of New

[1] See Appendix C.

Orleans, whose Southern community, with its large intermixture of French blood, were keen lovers and supporters of opera. There they made a stay of three months. Adelina appeared in most of the parts that she had previously sung, creating a sensation the like of which had never been experienced in that emotional city; she also added to her répertoire one of her most famous rôles—that of *Dinorah*.

In New Orleans, too, she essayed a character apparently so far beyond the physical capacity of a girl not yet eighteen that one may well wonder how her advisers could have allowed her to undertake it. It was nothing less than the rôle of *Valentina* in "Les Huguenots." Imagine such a thing! One of the heaviest dramatic parts in the whole range of opera—as heavy, nearly, as the Wagnerian type of heroine then coming into existence—sung by a girl who had been only a year or so on the stage! How came she to be permitted to burden her youthful voice and fragile physique with such a tremendous task? From every point of view, it seems inexcusable, inexplicable!

That it did not overtax her resources and do irreparable damage stands to no one's credit but her own, or rather to that rare instinct which nature had conferred upon her for balancing big weights with such perfect poise that they could neither crush her nor leave their mark behind. Still, the experience may have taught a lesson; for, even after she had reached "years of discretion," Adelina Patti seldom attacked the part of *Valentina*. She did so at Covent Garden later, as a *tour de force* only to be attempted now and then, perhaps on the occasion of her "annual benefit"; but that was all.

Nevertheless, it is an undeniable fact that, whenever she stepped out of her true line and sang an exacting dramatic rôle, her art was so satisfying that the effort never left a sense of insufficiency on either the vocal or the histrionic side. Indeed, there were times when these very imperson-

ations aroused wilder enthusiasm than those to which she was more completely suited. At New Orleans they took their place in the round of characters wherein she was delighting a public agape with amazement not unmingled with pride. So much may, at any rate, be gathered from the following extract from the local paper published in February, 1861:

> It is now three months since Adelina Patti came amongst us. She has appeared in "Lucia," "Martha," "Barbiere," "Il Trovatore," "Rigoletto," "The Huguenots" (as *Valentina*), and in the "Pardon de Ploërmel" (*Dinorah*). In each of these operas a new triumph attended her. Adelina Patti may well be proud to have produced such a great sensation here, and to have crowded our opera house for three months every night she has appeared; and when she appears in London and Paris, and takes possession of the place left vacant by Sontag and Bosio, whose legitimate successor she now is, New Orleans will have the satisfaction of having first [*sic*] recognized and appreciated the young artist. Miss Patti is, in our opinion, the most extraordinary artist on the operatic stage. She unites to a voice clear, powerful, always in tune, capable of expressing every sentiment of the soul and of executing the most difficult and intricate passages with the utmost ease, a chastity of style, a grace of delivery, and musical accentuation perfectly marvelous.

Thus do we find New Orleans laying the flattering unction to its soul that it "discovered" Patti. Seemingly her successes at New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and elsewhere did not count. Well, this was only one manifestation of the struggle that was now going on in the United States for the honor of establishing a direct claim upon the new star and her services. But her manager was anxious that she should proceed to Mexico; indeed, she was practically under engagement to sing there. He has related how it came about that this was prevented.

Almost on the eve of her departure from New Orleans, Adelina met at the St. Louis Hotel (where they were staying)

two young girls who told her of some terrible experiences they had recently encountered in Mexico. They had been attacked by brigands, robbed of all their belongings, and otherwise ill-treated. Indeed, they had escaped with their lives and not much more.

This was quite enough for Adelina. She refused point-blank to venture a yard into the neighboring territory—then, as now, tempting but troubled. So the trip had to be abandoned. But Mexico's loss proved to be Cuba's gain. They went instead to Havana, where the youthful prima donna had sung at concerts as a child when on her tour with Gottschalk. Her present short but lucrative engagement at the opera house there was to be the preliminary to the most important step of her career—her first visit to Europe.

For some time Maurice Strakosch had been turning longing eyes toward England. The test made so far in America had proved successful beyond his wildest dreams. In twelve months they had made a great deal of money and demonstrated beyond dispute that Adelina Patti was a genius *hors ligne*. Would the colder and more critical public of London place a similar estimate upon her powers? As to that, the younger she was the more phenomenal must her genius appear. Surely, then, the moment was propitious.

Truth to tell, the operatic situation in London at this particular epoch was far more favorable to the execution of the Strakosch plan than he could possibly have imagined. In order to understand this and make subsequent events clear, it will be necessary to describe in some detail how matters actually stood.

In 1860 the long and bitter rivalry between the two opera houses, Covent Garden and Her Majesty's, had reached a climax. The sudden and unexpected retirement of Jenny Lind had plunged Mr. Benjamin Lumley, director of Her Majesty's

AMINA, 1862

IN LONDON, 1861

Theatre, into a series of difficulties from which the subsequent successes of Piccolomini, Tietjens, Alboni, and Giuglini had failed to rescue him. His downfall was now an accomplished fact. On the other hand, at Covent Garden the Royal Italian Opera, under the direction of Mr. Frederick Gye, was rejoicing in a strong company of artists and had the cream of London society at its back.

Nevertheless, arrangements were in progress for Her Majesty's to reopen for the season of 1861 under the management of a well known *entrepreneur*, Mr. Edward Tyrrel Smith, who was to inaugurate therewith his first operatic campaign. His agent (or business manager, as we should now say) was the versatile James Henry Mapleson. His principal stars were to be Mario and Grisi, who had been persuaded to desert Mr. Gye in order to come under the new banner. The expectation of a monopoly for Covent Garden seemed once more doomed to disappointment. There was every prospect of another stiff fight between the two houses.

At this critical moment, the tale of an extraordinary series of successes achieved in America by a young soprano named Adelina Patti began to arouse nascent attention in London operatic circles. The musical papers had for some time been supplied (we may guess by whom) with cuttings from the columns of the American press; and these reports, if they had failed greatly to interest the British public, had not escaped the notice of E. T. Smith's agent. In short, Mapleson had already opened negotiations with Maurice Strakosch, and by the end of the month of March he had, on his principal's behalf, entered into a contract whereby Mlle. Patti "undertook to sing four nights on approval, when, in case of success, she was to have a salary of £40 a week."[1]

[1] This is the amount mentioned by Mr. Mapleson in his "Memoirs" (London, 1888); but Strakosch, in his rather earlier "Souvenirs," states that the prima donna's salary was to be 10,000 francs (£400) a month. The smaller figure is probably correct.

But the contract was not destined to be carried out. It had been signed by both parties and copies exchanged through the post. Strakosch lost no time in bringing the performances at Havana to a conclusion. By the end of March he was starting with his sister-in-law and her father on the voyage to England. But, while they were on the ocean, things happened that were to alter the course of events entirely; and, as the days of wireless telegraphy had not yet arrived,—Atlantic crossings still occupied from twelve to fifteen days,—the travellers learned nothing until after they had landed in London.

What had taken place was this: E. T. Smith, who was to have been Adelina Patti's first English impresario, had got into financial difficulties. Not satisfied with aspiring to the direction of Her Majesty's Theatre, he had entered into a number of outside speculations, some of which had turned out badly and involved him in serious loss. As the date for the opening of the season of 1861 gradually drew nearer, it became increasingly difficult to discover the whereabouts of E. T. Smith. Even his own agent, James Mapleson,—usually an astute and active individual,—found it harder and harder to lay hands on him.

Yet his operatic venture wore at this time an extremely healthy look. In fact, it promised so well that Frederick Gye, his powerful opponent at Covent Garden, was beginning to suffer considerable perturbation of mind. Then, one day, a friend brought Mr. Gye information concerning Mr. Smith's pecuniary straits. This was news indeed. Had he not been the most calm and dignified of men, Mr. Gye must assuredly have flung his "Lincoln and Bennett" into the air. Figuratively, no doubt, he did so. And then a brilliant thought struck him; why not buy out E. T. Smith?

That gentleman may have been lying *perdu*. Be that as it may, Frederick Gye promptly found means for communi-

cating with him. Great secrecy was, however, observed on both sides; so much so that it remains to this day a moot question which of the two managers visited the other, or whether a personal meeting between them actually took place at all. Whatever the nature of the negotiations, a bargain was quickly struck, and one fine morning the news leaked out that there was to be no opera season at Her Majesty's. As a matter of fact, Mr. Gye had paid E. T. Smith a cash sum of £4000, in consideration of which he agreed to abandon his enterprise.

In such wise was the threatened competition averted; but at the cost of disappointment, worry, and loss for every one concerned—except Mr. Gye and Mr. Smith. The latter's contracts became, of course, worthless. Mario and Grisi fell between the two stools. They were too valuable, though, to remain long "on the ground." Mr. Gye soon made up his quarrel with them, and they duly restored their allegiance to Covent Garden, where, by the way, Grisi was that year (1861) to bid farewell to the British public.

James Henry Mapleson's road to operatic management on his own account was no doubt greatly facilitated by the collapse of E. T. Smith. At the same time, that collapse robbed him, much to his subsequent regret, of something that would have brought him lasting credit and incalculable profit —namely, the privilege of introducing Adelina Patti to the operatic boards and the public of the British metropolis.

Such, then, was the situation in London early in April, 1861, when the expectant trio landed at Liverpool, took train to Euston, and installed themselves at the Arundel Hotel, on what is now the Thames Embankment, at the foot of Norfolk Street, Strand. It took Maurice Strakosch less than half an hour to acquaint himself with the prevailing state of affairs. He perceived that his contract with Mapleson was

worth so much waste paper, and that he would never get a penny of compensation from E. T. Smith. His tactics under these circumstances were masterly. First of all, he arranged an interview with Mr. Mapleson, which that gentleman has thus described:[1]

> They wished to know when Mr. Smith's season was likely to begin. I could give them no information beyond the current report, which they had already heard themselves. The little lady, who was then seated on a sofa at the Arundel Hotel, suggested that I should try the speculation myself, as she felt sure she would draw money. I thereupon asked her to let me hear her, that I might judge as to the quality of her voice, to which she responded by singing "Home, sweet home." I saw that I had secured a diamond of the first water, and immediately set about endeavouring to get Her Majesty's Theatre. But this was a hopeless business, as Smith, who still held the lease, was nowhere to be found.

Meanwhile Strakosch had not the least intention of waiting until Mapleson found a theatre or of going to law with him. He went straight to Frederick Gye and asked him whether he would take up the cancelled contract. At first the autocrat of Covent Garden answered with a curt refusal. Who was this Mlle. Adelina Patti? He had never heard of her; or, if he had, an American reputation meant nothing to him. Strakosch, however, persisted with his arguments, and begged Mr. Gye to at least grant her an audition. To this he ultimately consented.

The result was satisfactory. The impresario carefully concealed his admiration for the young girl's singing, and paid Strakosch an advance of £50, for which the latter gave him a receipt. A few days later, Mapleson, having secured the Lyceum Theatre for his season, called at the Arundel Hotel "to inform Miss Patti and Mr. Strakosch of my good luck.

[1] "Mapleson Memoirs," Vol. I, p. 33.

They did not seem overjoyed, or in any way to participate in my exuberant delight.'' The explanation, as given by the disappointed Mapleson, is rather curious. He says:

> Maurice Strakosch told me that, as their last £5 note had been spent, he had been obliged to borrow £50 of Mr. Gye, which intelligence at once reduced my height by about two inches; and after a deal of difficulty I ascertained that he had signed a receipt for the said loan in a form which really constituted an engagement for the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden. In short, I found myself manager of the Lyceum Theatre, with an expensive company, and with Mlle. Patti opposed to me in the immediate vicinity at Covent Garden.[1]

Thus the Strakosch ruse for getting rid of Mapleson had succeeded to perfection.

The new contract with Mr. Gye was, however, a rather one-sided document. By its terms he ran no risk whatever and stood to make a great deal of money. He was to allow Mlle. Patti three trial performances, *for which no payment was to be made.* In the event of failure at any of these, he was at liberty to decline to ratify the engagement. If the newcomer met with success, it was agreed that she should be engaged for five years, at the rate of £150 a month for the first year, £200 for the second, £250 for the third, £300 for the fourth, and £400 for the fifth. And it was further stipulated that she should sing twice a week. At this rate her average fee for the five years worked out at the huge sum of £32 10s. for each performance!

Still, no one has a right to blame Mr. Gye for making the best terms he could. Who was to foresee that in less than six weeks from the signing of that contract the merry, dark-eyed little soprano from the United States would be the operatic idol of the British public, creating a furore that

[1] "Mapleson Memoirs," Vol. I, p. 36.

was to cast even the famous "Jenny Lind fever" into the shade?

Opera managers are essentially business men, and, following the commercial rule, so long as they are driving their bargain they will appraise at the lowest possible figure the value of an artist's services, more particularly when that artist is untried or practically unknown. Once the bird is caught, however, they proceed to the opposite extreme and do everything in their power to heighten the value of their *trouvaille* in the estimation of subscribers, newspaper critics, and the public generally. So, in his quiet way, the wily Mr. Gye began to talk to people about Adelina Patti; yet without overdoing it, for he was much too clever a diplomatist to arouse expectations to such a height that disappointment might ensue.

In those days the vogue of the modern press-agent had hardly begun. Even in America his prototypes of the circus and the theatre had only just started their Barnum-like methods of advertising talent in advance. "Concert Directions," with their neat but expensive systems of scientific puffing, were as yet non-existent. Musicians did not fill whole columns of the daily paper with press quotations that cost a half a crown a line. The sandwich-man—that curious human vehicle for the display of the moving poster and bill-board—had still to emerge from his chrysalis state. Hoardings in the streets, on the railways, in the "tubes," were not yet available for huge pictures of a certain vivacious face that was one day to greet the world with a familiar query concerning the matutinal use of a particular kind of soap.

The morning journals in the early sixties scorned the "puff preliminary." Nay, they would sometimes refuse even to insert the bare announcement in their news columns that an unknown artist was about to appear upon the scene. The

weeklies were scarcely more obliging. There remained the musical papers. Of these the *Musical World* seems to have been best acquainted with the position earned in America by Mlle. Patti (the prefix "Miss" now disappears for good) and most inclined to publish paragraphs about her. Some that were quoted in the issue for May 11, 1861, received the following editorial comment:

> These extracts must, doubtless, excite curiosity in no ordinary degree. Even allowing that one half of what the writers say be true, it makes out Mlle. Patti to be a singularly endowed and accomplished artist. . . .
>
> Shortly after writing the above, we learned that Mlle. Adelina Patti had been engaged by the director of the Royal Italian Opera, and that she was to make her first appearance on Tuesday in "La Sonnambula." The début of a prima donna is always an interesting event, particularly when the character to be assumed is one with which the memory of so many renowned artists is associated; and therefore our preliminary notes may have some value. The interest becomes deeper when the débutanté is so highly recommended, and expectation is elevated in proportion. "Shall we hear and see a Malibran, a Persiani, a Lind, a Bosio?" This question we shall be enabled to resolve satisfactorily next week. In the meanwhile, we wish every success to the youthful and much be-praised cantatrice, and trust that the result of Tuesday's performance may realize the most sanguine anticipations of her friends on the other side of the Atlantic.

In our later days of advance-heraldry, it is worth noting that there was a total absence of noisy trumpeting to impart fictitious éclat to what proved to be the most brilliantly successful operatic début of the nineteenth century. Beyond the press extracts referred to and some gossip in musical circles, there was absolutely nothing.

Signor Arditi makes the point clear in his "Reminiscences." He observes, apropos of this event:

The reports which had reached the English public about her successes in America were looked upon as exaggerated and extravagant, and I really believe that, on the occasion on which she laid the foundation of the pedestal upon which she has reigned ever since, there were not twenty people in the house who knew that Adelina Patti was a singer of more than ordinary merit.

I, however, had heard her sing in America, and had witnessed the scenes of extraordinary triumph in which her vocal efforts had been received, cheered, and clamoured for; I had seen the child grow up into a beautiful girl; I had noted the improvements which her voice had undergone, and the rich and rapid development of her faultless register that was about to come upon the British public as a revelation. . . . A very few people who had been present at the hurried and shortened rehearsals knew what was to follow; but nothing was known of Patti's antecedents, her name having appeared only four days in advance of her début, and *without a single remark in the advertisements.*

Still, as has been said, Mr. Gye took care to let his friends know that he thought he had made a valuable discovery. On the fateful morning itself he was visited by one of his devoted supporters, the popular pianist William Kuhe,[1] who was also destined to become one of Adelina Patti's staunchest friends. When Mr. Gye bade him good-bye, he said: "Come to Covent Garden to-night and hear 'Sonnambula.' A little girl is to sing *Amina,* and I shall not be surprised if she makes a big hit."

That day was the 14th of May, 1861.

[1] "My Musical Recollections," by William Kuhe. London, 1896.

CHAPTER VI

An Historical Coincidence—The Mantle of "La Diva"—Grisi and Patti (1834 and 1861)—Operatic Criticism in the Sixties—The Youthful Singer's New Artistic Growth—Her Triumphant Début at Covent Garden—"La Sonnambula" on the first Patti Night—The Story of a Memorable Event—Critics and Public Amazed—The Reign of Patti Begun—Its Significance—Her Personality and Genius

BEFORE coming to the actual incidents of the London début, it will be worth while to dwell for a moment upon an oft-noted coincidence, viz.: that the opera season of 1861, made memorable through the advent in Europe of Adelina Patti, also witnessed the retirement of Giulia Grisi, the great Italian singer, after her career of twenty-seven years upon the Covent Garden boards. It was Grisi who, ever since the premature departure of Jenny Lind from the operatic stage (1849), had been the possessor of the much-coveted title of "La Diva." And the question "Who will succeed to it?" was already being anxiously asked.

Little did the *cognoscenti* of the period dream that it would fall to a comparatively unknown girl of eighteen! They were probably ready to bestow it upon the gifted Theresa Tietjens, upon whose shoulders the mantle of Grisi as the leading dramatic soprano of her time seemed naturally destined to descend. The mantle, indeed, did so descend; but with it *not* the exalted title, which was now to revert to a singer of the lighter rôles of the repertory. The fact that Tietjens was not at Covent Garden had no bearing upon the verdict. There was, however, something else which has been regarded as curious, namely, a certain similarity between the circum-

stances attending the débuts of Giulia Grisi and Adelina Patti, and which served to heighten the interest of the coincidence above alluded to.

Each artist came upon the scene just when her predecessor in public favor was quitting it; and from neither, as a débutante, was anything extraordinary expected. A contemporary writer thus described Grisi's first appearance at Covent Garden in 1834:

> When Grisi made her début Malibran was astonishing Europe; Pasta's star had just declined; Sontag had not long withdrawn into private life; the triumph of Catalani had not been forgotten. . . . There was a poor attendance and no excitement. The first appearance, however, of the new *Ninetta* (in "La Gazza Ladra") created universal interest. At that time Grisi was about two-and-twenty: she was eminently beautiful, with features as regular as if hewn out of marble by Phidias or Praxiteles, an expression as various and mutable as that of an April day. As she advanced to the footlights she seized on every eye, on every heart. Her triumph was to a considerable extent secured. But when she sang that transcendent burst of love and joy, "Di piacer mi balza il cor," and revealed a voice that for purity, beauty, and tender grace has never been surpassed,—displaying, moreover, such infinite charm in her singing,—the effect may be imagined. The audience was intoxicated, and Giulia Grisi became the idol of the day.

Beyond this, however, the resemblance did not extend. Grisi had found herself confronted with the opposition of Malibran; a little later Jenny Lind was to appear. But Patti had no such rival stars to contend against. Bosio had last appeared here in 1858, the season in which Tietjens first sang in London. However, the latter and the celebrated French soprano, Miolan-Carvalho, stood—as dramatic rather than as light or florid singers—in a different category. Rivals in the truer sense, such as Christine Nilsson and Pauline Lucca, were near at hand, but they did not arrive until Adelina Patti

had had ample time to establish herself in public favor as by far the most popular and gifted *cantatrice* of her epoch. It was rather in the degree that she awakened still vivid memories of the great women who had preceded her, and challenged comparison with their powerful traditions, that she had most to overcome before attaining the goal of absolute sovereignty. This process, as we shall see, was not achieved without continued study and hard work. It was compelled by good motives, the origin of which is also worth pointing out.

Sixty years ago there existed a much wider disparity between American and English standards of operatic criticism. The New York critics of 1860 had pronounced Adelina Patti an artist *hors ligne* and beyond reproach. That verdict was not destined to be literally endorsed in London, even in the face of the most brilliant début on record. English critics of that day were wont to judge singers from a far loftier and more exacting standpoint. Since the period (in the nineties) when the late Maurice Grau was assuming the simultaneous direction of both Covent Garden and the New York Metropolitan there has been less to choose between the two opera houses. Each searches for the best procurable talent and strives to give opera in the finest possible manner. If there be any difference in the strength of ensemble and the average brilliancy of the vocal constellation, the advantage is now on the side of New York, which commands (and empties) by far the larger exchequer for the indulgence of its operatic luxuries.

Half a century ago Americans spent their money liberally on opera, as on every other form of costly amusement. But their taste was then less cultivated, less fastidious, their appreciation of the nuances of the vocal art less subtly analytical. Their standard was consequently less severe; and as with the

public so it was with the newspaper critics, who were regarded rather as accomplished journalists than as musicians.

On the other hand, the mid-Victorian musical critics of the London press were familiar with the *dernier mot* of the Italian school of vocalization. They were accustomed to base their judgment upon the art of those supreme exemplars who had followed in the wake of Catalani and Pasta,—to wit, Malibran, Sontag, Jenny Lind, Grisi, Bosio, and Alboni,—not merely celebrities starring on tour in the concert room, but great singers displaying their genius in their true native element, the lyric theatre.

While, therefore, this severer line of criticism enhanced the merit of a very wonderful victory, it was also, in the end, to prove far more helpful than the kind that sees perfection in every effort. Indeed, the change of *milieu* was to have the effect of exalting the level of the new-comer's career to a nobler and loftier plane.

From the outset, this slim, captivating girl, with her beautiful organ and her spontaneous, birdlike execution, was bound to dazzle and delight her audiences. Her youthfulness, combined with her natural winning grace, her intense earnestness and fire, enabled her, here as elsewhere, to carry all before her. The hardest of the *cognoscenti* were fain to admit in after years that, from the very first, she had been the delicious and irresistible Adelina Patti whose magic voice and bewitching personality brought the whole world to her feet.

There remains, nevertheless, to answer the interesting question—Was the diva of the early sixties as yet the matchless and impeccable vocal artist who held her own against all comers during the succeeding three decades?

Apparently not. Mingled with her supreme gifts were still some imperfections. Writers found fault with her on technical grounds; they even objected to the quality of certain

notes in her medium register. They charged her with occasional defects of style, notably an excessive employment of the *staccato* in her *fioriture* and the interpolation of inappropriate embellishments. They admitted the amazing skill and finish with which everything was executed, but they still found many points that displeased them.

Now these same newspaper writers—James Davison of the *Times,* the elder Desmond Ryan of the *Morning Chronicle,* Henry Lincoln of the *Daily News,* Henry F. Chorley of the *Athenæum,* Sutherland Edwards of the *St. James's Gazette,* and Henry Hersee of the *Globe,* among others—were to linger long enough at their posts, not to change their minds, but to witness the gradual disappearance of every blemish that had at first evoked their adverse criticism. As a matter of fact, in the course of two or three seasons they ceased to entirely "pick holes"; and it is not only reasonable but fair to assume that they did so because by degrees they perceived no more holes to pick. In other words, by dint of assiduous study the youthful artist contrived to rid herself of her imperfections, one by one, until at last perfection alone remained.

It was, she declared, her ambition to be above criticism. It has been asserted that she was never allowed to peruse a notice, and certainly none but those that were wholly favorable were permitted at this period to reach her gaze. But Maurice Strakosch, as in duty bound, read and digested every article or cutting as it came to hand; and his was the task of prescribing the remedy for any fault, whether of conception, technique, or execution. Without a word of reproach, without even a suggestion that anything was wrong, he would quietly bring about the necessary change. Sometimes the process in this way would take weeks; sometimes it would be accomplished at a sitting. In any case, the desired alteration was sure to be effected sooner or later. The fault would disappear, never again to evoke a reproach.

In such placid fashion did Adelina Patti complete her task of advancing to the topmost rung of the artistic ladder. The ascent never made her giddy, for she stopped neither to look below nor glance around. She had begun, indeed, where the majority are content to remain, and her upward progress was never hampered or delayed by a solitary obstacle worthy of mention.

And now, after this preliminary digression, let us to the story of the début.

Tuesday, May 14, 1861, was a subscription night at Covent Garden. It was the custom then to allot only three nights a week to subscribers—Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. There was generally an "extra night," as it was termed, on Wednesdays; but, as a rule, the house was closed on Mondays and Fridays. This arrangement helped to enhance the brilliancy of the subscription nights, so that the numerous attendance recorded on this particular occasion owed nothing to the first appearance of a new prima donna. Its vital interest was to be purely posthumous.

It was the first "Patti night."

Who could know beforehand that it was to inaugurate a new expression in the language of opera-goers? Who could guess that the term "Patti night" was thenceforward to be synonymous with excited crowds, gatherings of the élite of the English aristocracy, magnificent displays of dress and diamonds, seats at a premium, enthusiasm inevitable and without stint? No one could dream this, or there would have been a different tale to tell. Yet, being a subscription night, the audience was as surely a representative one, even as it was the most distinguished that Adelina Patti had yet sung before in her brief stage career.

Here is the cast of the opera as it appeared in Mr. Gye's programme:

ROYAL ITALIAN OPERA,
COVENT GARDEN.

DEBUT OF MDLLE. PATTI.
14th May, 1861.
Bellini's opera,
"LA SONNAMBULA."

Amina.....Mdlle. Patti.
(Her first appearance in England)
Lisa.....Mdme. Tagliafico.
Teresa.....Mdme. Leva.
Notaro.....Signor Rossi.
Count Rodolfo.....Signor Tagliafico.
Alessio.....Signor Polonini.
Elvino.....Signor Tiberini.
Conductor—Mr. Costa.

For the choice of the opera Mr. Gye was responsible. He wisely preferred it to "Lucia di Lammermoor," in which the new soprano had made her New York début eighteen months before. Comparisons with other *Aminas* might be hard to avoid, but Bellini's heroine was one of the lightest, most girlish parts in the repertory, and less exacting from a dramatic standpoint than that of *Lucia*. The critics would at least have to admit that it suited her and that the ingénue of eighteen was not overweighted.

The impressions of that reddest of red-letter nights have been recorded by many pens. They provided material for years of rapture and rhapsody. They were recounted again and again to the present writer by people who had been fortunate enough to be there, one and all of whom agreed that it had afforded a unique experience of a lifetime.

For never before was expectation so far surpassed; never was overwhelming triumph on the field of a hundred operatic battles so simply and so easily achieved. From her *aria*

d'entrata—the suave cantilena, "Come per me sereno," with its gracious pendant, "Sovra il sen," all through the opera to the pathetic melody of "Ah! non credea" and the brilliant finale, "Ah! non giunge," the youthful songstress held her hearers spellbound by the witchery of her voice, her art, and her personality. As a famous sporting earl, who was a great patron of the opera in the sixties, once remarked in my hearing, "She made her own running and won hands down!"

Truth to tell, the house was inclined at first to be rather cold. A sympathetic round of applause greeted the newcomer when her slight figure emerged from the wings and, for the first time, she took the centre of the vast stage that was thenceforth to know her so well. But no prolonged evidence of delight was forthcoming until after the curtain fell on the first act, and then, in accordance with the custom of the period, bouquets were hurled on to the stage from every direction. From that moment the excitement grew and grew, as habitués perceived more clearly the calibre of the new star, until finally the opera ended amid a perfect hurricane of applause and recalls.

The critics, like the public, were taken utterly by surprise. They were prepared to hear a clever girl—one even worthy, perhaps, of her big American reputation—but not a phenomenon of this class; a vocal wonder not yet out of her teens, combining in her many-sided talents all the supreme qualities of the great Italian school. They were genuinely dumbfounded.[1]

[1] Writing eleven years later in the *Daily Telegraph*, Joseph Bennett recalled the début of Adelina Patti in these terms: "She came, as amateurs of opera well remember, unheralded by trumpet-blowing and unsupported by organised enthusiasm (an article at that time largely manufactured). In plain terms, she took her chance with the public, resting solely upon personal merits for a favourable issue. The result is matter of history, and in it genuine talent may discover ample rea-

There was more time then for lengthy over-night notices than in these days of journalistic "hustle." Critics could write for the morning papers until 2 or even 3 A. M. Davison's article in the *Times* extended to an entire closely printed column.[1] A notable example of decisive and unerring judgment, of critical acumen and quick perception, it formed, notwithstanding its occasionally involved sentences, a masterly appreciation of the rare gifts and still rarer promise evinced by this extraordinary débutante.

Late as it was when the performance ended, people rushed from the opera house to tell their friends the news of Mr. Gye's precious *trouvaille*. It spread like wildfire, and formed the subject of conversation at the West End clubs far into the night. By the morning all kinds of stories were afloat concerning the miraculous accomplishments of the girl prima donna; by the afternoon every seat for her second appearance had been disposed of.

The Reign of Patti had begun!

It is important to dwell for a moment upon the significance of this event. To understand it properly we must be able to visualize Adelina Patti at this period—that is to say, what she was herself and what she stood for as an artist. There can be few persons still living who witnessed her début at Covent Garden, or who heard her during her first season. Many there are, however, who well recollect her a few years later, when she had reached her prime; and for such (the present writer among them) there has never been any great difficulty in conjuring up a vivid mental picture of the

son for hope and confidence. We do not overlook the gifts of person and manner which were adventitious but important aids to Madame Patti's triumph, and still form an element in her unmatched perfection; but, these things apart, it is encouraging to see how genius can make its way to the front and there command approval."

[1] See Appendix D for this and other notices of the début.

"Incantatrice" as she was when she arose and wrought her unsuspected spell upon a blasé audience on that memorable night.

It is less easy to describe either the vision or the singer without employing language that savors of hyperbole. You are to conjure up, to begin with, a personality of the utmost charm, embodied in a "little lady" who possessed the gift of magnetism in the same degree that it must have been exercised by a Sarah Siddons, a Malibran, or a Rachel. That power was enhanced by the strange, sensuous beauty of a voice that thrilled and pursued you—gorgeous in its rich, dark, voluptuous coloring, unsurpassable in its perfect equality throughout the scale—as no voice has ever thrilled or haunted since.

Imagine first this combination, with its irresistible attributes of youth and freshness, of natural grace, impulse, and spontaneity. Then imagine, in addition, all those arts of the great singer, effortless and pure, from the unaffected touching delivery of a simple melody to the most brilliant conceivable execution of every known example of Italian coloratura. Finally, think of the all-pervading touch of unfailing dramatic instinct, the inborn sense of the theatre, the appropriateness that stamped with the impress of an artistic touch every look, gesture, or utterance.

We hear to-day of singers "in the great line." We behold attempts to persuade a credulous public that they are listening to "a successor of Patti," because some intelligent soprano with a pretty voice and some facility can render neatly a few *bravura* airs. We even hear clever prime donne who can do fair justice to the hackneyed old arias, but have only a rudimentary notion of how to sing Mozart; others whose technique is equal to effective fireworks, but does not extend to ordinary breath control or a genuine shake. Unfortunately, the connoisseurs of the twentieth century are not such

fine judges of the vocal art as those who "went crazy" over Adelina Patti when she first came out. Such comparisons between stars of the past and present are, therefore, unjustifiable and absurd.

The youthful diva conquered instantaneously by virtue of an astounding combination of qualities which enabled her to fulfil every requirement of the prevailing standard—a standard that was not merely an exalted academic theory, but a something living, palpable, unmistakable, in the ears and minds of the public of that day. Ready as they were at that psychological moment to acclaim the newly arisen star, nothing less than a genius of so rare an order could have satisfied them or have roused them to so exceptional a pitch of enthusiasm.

So much for the secret of Patti's initial European triumph. Her unparalleled hold upon two operatice generations or more may be explained by something besides her genius and the remarkable preservation of her organ. It was surely due in no small measure to the fact that she interpreted the operas and the music dearest to the public of her time. Nay, more; stopping short only at Wagner, she advanced with Verdi, Meyerbeer, and Gounod in the period of change that marked the first solid development of what we know as modern opera. In a word, declining to be associated exclusively with the "old school," or, indeed, with any particular phase of her art, she never made her thousands of adorers feel that, in order to listen to Patti, they were compelled to sit through operas of a type that did not appeal to them.

All who heard Patti in the early seventies were able to form a fairly accurate idea of the irresistible fascination that had brought London instantly to her feet. Concerning the excitement that the début created, one can only trust contemporary evidence. It is almost impossible at this distance of time

to convey a faint notion of the degree to which the community lost its head. Even Mr. *Punch* failed to preserve his equilibrium, and his first tribute took the form of an atrocious pun:—

Describing the début last week of Mlle. Patti, whose performance seemed to promise us a second Jenny Lind, one of the critics made a remark that she raised the house *en masse* to a high pitch of excitement. On reading this, the Wiscount, who chanced to be just then in one of his facetious moods, observed to his friend Vernal, "Raised the house, did she? Why, really, then, she must be quite a *hoister Patti!*"

And in the following number this:

A Poem to Patti

O charming Adelina!
How sweet is thy *Amina!*
How bewitching thy *Zerlina!*
How seldom has there been a
More tunable *Norina!*
And have I ever seen a
More enjoyable *Rosina?*
But to tell the praise I mean a-
-Las! there should have been a
Score more rhymes to Adelina.

CHAPTER VII

The Covent Garden Contract Ratified—Facts About the New Terms—Progress of the Patti Craze (1861)—First Appearance in "Lucia"—Chorley's Carping Criticisms in the *Athenæum*—The Girl *Violetta*—Resisting Fatigue and Achieving Perfection—The Great "Don Giovanni" Cast: a Unique Ensemble—Patti and Mario in "Il Barbiere"—The Ideal *Zerlina* and *Rosina*—Ornamentation of Rossini—The Season's Record—Charles Dickens on the New Diva

BETWEEN the night of Mlle. Patti's début and her second appearance at Covent Garden (again in the part of *Amina*) eight days elapsed. Under the circumstances it was an unusually long interval, and in all probability was the outcome of design, not accident. Anyhow, it so helped to whet the curiosity of the public that seats for the second Patti night were to be had at the libraries only at an exorbitant premium.

In this device the skilful hand of Frederick Gye was easily to be traced. His earlier experiences as manager of Alfred Jullien's concerts had made him an adept at the game of "booming" a star. He knew the advantage to be derived from making his cliéntèle exercise a little patience. Otherwise he had little to do in this case but sit in his Bow Street sanctum and allow the boom to develop itself.

Mr. Gye did not, however, avail himself of the right to wait for a third "trial performance" before ratifying his contract with Mlle. Patti and her brother-in-law. Neither did he offer to tear it up and substitute another agreement more favorable to the artist. He stuck to his bargain, and merely added a clause undertaking to pay her £100 for every performance over and above the two a week already stipulated for.

William Kuhe in his "Recollections" tells a somewhat dif-

ferent story regarding this new arrangement.[1] He observes:

"During the young diva's stay in Vienna, it was found that a contract signed by herself alone had no binding power, since she was not of age. Mr. Gye had, therefore, to renew his agreement with her for three years on terms much more advantageous to her than those of the former contract. In this, as in all that concerned her interests, her brother-in-law proved himself a keen business man."

But what does the brother-in-law say?

He declares[2] that "Although the effect of Mlle. Patti's appearance at Covent Garden was overwhelming and the enthusiasm immediately assumed immense proportions, Mr. F. Gye stood strictly by his contract until the five years had expired." Barring the concession of £100 each for the extra performances, he adds, "Until the day of her marriage with the Marquis de Caux, Mme. A. Patti never received from Mr. Gye more than £120 a night."[3]

There exists, however, a plausible explanation of the above discrepancy, tending to prove that neither deponent is entirely right or wrong. Mr. Kuhe places the visit to Vienna in the same summer (1861) as the Covent Garden début. As a matter of fact, Mlle. Patti did not go to Vienna in that year. She made her first appearance in the Austrian capital in February, 1863. By that time two of her five years' contract with Mr. Gye had expired, and it may very well be that, after the legal discovery already alluded to, Mr. Gye deemed it wiser to enter into a new contract for the *three* remaining years, as stated by Mr. Kuhe. But Maurice Strakosch does not make any mention of this renewal, which may have slipped

[1] Kuhe's "Musical Recollections," p. 156.

[2] "Souvenirs d'un Impresario," p. 33.

[3] The marriage took place in July, 1868, and as the original contract with Mr. Gye expired after the season of 1865, the higher *cachet* of £120 can only, according to Maurice Strakosch, have been paid during the intervening three seasons.

his memory. Nor does he make any allusion to the "more advantageous terms," which he was certainly not the man to have forgotten had he been instrumental in securing them.

Meanwhile, in its very earliest stages the progress of the Patti craze, as rapid as it was widespread, stirred the opera-lovers of London to displays of a kind that had not been in evidence since the height of the "Jenny Lind fever." The crowds that gathered at the stage-door of Covent Garden were so large that the services of an extra posse of police had to be requisitioned from Bow Street. The scene inside the opera house when the new favorite made her second appearance as *Amina* afforded some idea of the extent to which the popular imagination had become aroused. To quote one well-known writer: "Mlle. Patti contrived to ravish one half the house and convert the other half, who had gone to hear her sceptical as to all the reports about her, and now had to enrol themselves among her most enthusiastic admirers."

That was on Thursday, May 23. On the following Saturday she made her third appearance, this time in "Lucia di Lammermoor," which favorite but hackneyed opera had not been heard at Covent Garden for four years. Very different was the "atmosphere" of the house from that of the début night. It was now tense with excitement and expectation; every seat was occupied; all the leaders of fashion were present. The renowned conductor, Michael Costa,—soon to sever his connection with Covent Garden,—glanced round the auditorium with a look of satisfaction as he buttoned his white gloves and twisted the silk tassel of his baton round his wrist. He was already a great friend and admirer of the "little lady."

Nothing was lacking that could lend brilliancy to the occasion. Even Mr. Gye entered his box earlier than usual to survey the gratifying scene. He always occupied the "cosy

corner'' next to the stage, almost under the royal box—a favored nook afterward appropriated by Mr. Alfred de Rothschild, who, it may be mentioned, was one of Mlle. Patti's earliest and staunchest supporters in Great Britain.

With her audience, at least, the success of the new *Lucia* was never in doubt. The house echoed again to resounding plaudits, and at each curtain-fall a wealth of floral gifts covered the broad ''apron'' between the curtain and the footlights. The final cadenza in the Mad Scene was followed by a storm of enthusiasm the like of which could not be recalled by the oldest habitué.

Yet, in the face of this indubitable triumph, the critics, less dazzled than before, less taken by surprise, remained characteristically cool. They even began to discover shortcomings. Quite justifiably, no doubt, they raised their critical standard a notch or two—as high, indeed, as it would go. Even Davison, if he had lost his heart over the new *Amina,* showed that he had not lost his head sufficiently to declare the new *Lucia* free from blemish. His notice in the *Times* [1] was well considered and, on the whole, fair. Of the weekly papers the *Musical World* gave the clearest indication why the critics were disappointed—namely, that the reading of the character was less charged with sentiment than the *Amina* had been. This brief notice may usefully be quoted here:

> Mlle. Patti looked the character of *Lucia* to the life, but she certainly betokened none of the passion and impulsive feeling so remarkable in her *Amina.* That the latter may be more agreeable to her instincts is not unlikely; but still, both parts having been played so differently, may have proceeded from nice and subtle discrimination of character. For the above reasons, and for these only, we cannot affirm that Mlle. Patti achieved the same triumphant success in "Lucia" as in "La Sonnambula"—which may demonstrate to many of her admirers that she belongs more to the Malibran than the

[1] See Appendix E.

VIOLETTA, 1862

ROSINA, 1862

Persiani school, which is indeed our own conviction. . . . In the Mad Scene, however, Mlle. Patti came up to the very highest anticipation, and carried the whole house with her by her natural and earnest acting and her really admirable singing.

The only direct broadside attack was fired by Henry F. Chorley, the powerful musical critic of the *Athenæum*, best known to the present generation by his inept and commonplace translation of the libretto of Gounod's *Faust*.[1] From this quarter something bitter had been expected, for Chorley was one of those wielders of the critical pen—to be found in every art centre and in every age—whose especial delight it is to make themselves feared. He was a singular mixture of ability, conceit, pomposity, and prejudice, and Joseph Bennett has truly said of him:[2]

"He had a special faculty of putting nasty remarks in very small paragraphs, with the inevitable result of making himself obnoxious, not only to those for whom they were intended, but to their sympathizers amongst the public and in the press. He was a man of strong likes and equally powerful dislikes."

At the outset it had seemed as though Adelina Patti might be included among Chorley's "likes." After her début he wrote: "Mlle. Patti was, from first to last, greeted with applause as rapturous as attended the best of her predecessors. The house seemed determined to pass an unanimous vote that she was perfect. We recollect no similar ovation at the Royal Italian Opera."[3] Nevertheless, he was of opinion that her voice sounded "rather tired," and he adhered to that opinion after hearing her as *Lucia*. In the later notice, however, he

[1] Still used, unfortunately, upon the English operatic stage, though long past copyright protection. The publishers to whom we owe this careful preservation of a literary curiosity have essayed to improve it, but in vain.

[2] "Forty Years of Music," by Joseph Bennett, 1908.

[3] The *Athenæum*, May 18, 1861.

appeared to have regretted the utterance of a single kind word, and wrote so harshly that his object must have defeated itself.[1] His "nasty remarks" are interesting merely as a sample of the only species of adverse criticism that the youthful débutante had to encounter.

As it happened, though, she never heard so much as a distant echo of these snappy barks from the edifying musical columns of the *Athenæum*. Maurice Strakosch read every notice, but Adelina never saw an unfavorable line; neither, probably, did her faithful and devoted father, Salvatore Patti, of whom little is heard in these prosperous London days, albeit he partook of their glories and looked carefully after the cash. It was only by means of her brother-in-law, then, that the beneficial effect of instructive—as distinguished from destructive—criticism filtered through to her. In that attenuated form she recognized in it nothing worse than a chaste incentive to the attainment of greater perfection and the creation of still loftier ideals.

Anyhow, as soon as the work would permit, she turned to study once more, and accomplished by degrees everything that an exacting world was now expecting from her. But that, of course, was not to be done in the midst of a strenuous and exciting London season. It took some time.

After three performances of "Lucia," followed by no fewer than five more in succession of "La Sonnambula"—a supply that still failed to satisfy the huge demand—Mr. Gye grew extremely bold. He revived "La Traviata" with by far the youngest *Violetta* that had ever been heard at Covent Garden; and, as some one said, "in order not to change the luck," gave her for supporting artists Signor Tiberini and Signor Graziani—he of the "noble baritone," who had so far sung with Mlle. Patti from the second night she appeared.

[1] See Appendix F.

The experiment resulted in another hit. Wiseacres shook their heads, but the amazing fact nevertheless stands out that the girl of eighteen was fully equal to the task of portraying Dumas's fragile heroine.[1] Nay, more; her assumption seems to have surprised the critics by its originality as much as by its maturity of conception and treatment. The notices were all favorable. Even the hypercritical Chorley had nothing to say against her impersonation as a whole, though he harped solemnly upon his favorite string—the "fatigued" tone of her voice. He wrote in the *Athenæum*:

> Midway betwixt Mlle. Piccolomini and Mme. Bosio stands Mlle. Patti as representative of 'La Traviata.' She is generally considered to have made a decided step in public favour by her performance of the repulsive part. Her acting is spoken of first because we think it better than her singing. . . . Much is said of the youthful promise of her voice. To our ears it is already worn and overdeveloped to a state when some months of complete rest ought judiciously to be afforded to it. As it stands, gain of volume would only lessen such charm as it possesses.

On the other hand, general opinion was summed up by the *Musical World* (July 6) in these words:

> A youthful, interesting appearance, and the fresh voice of girlhood, are indispensable qualifications for the representative of *Violetta,* and such are possessed by Mlle. Patti. . . . Previous performances have not prepared us for the striking display of histrionic genius with which Mlle. Patti delighted the public on Thursday night. Her last scene was truthful and beautiful. She drew "the trembling tear of speechless praise" from many an eye, and no eulogy we might offer could exceed this spontaneous tribute to the histrionic powers of the young artist. If Mlle. Patti played this scene so admirably, it may be readily supposed that where brilliant fluency of vocalisation was required she shone with almost incomparable lustre.

[1] See Appendix F.

If Chorley was right, it would have taken not weeks but months of absolute rest to overcome the "worn" condition of the voice he was in the habit of referring to. But his opinion was never confirmed, either by other authorities or by the actual facts. His caustic utterances on the subject sounded too persistently harsh to be altogether sincere; the grudging praise that sugared the pill had a hollow ring, like that of all critics who are incapable of whole-souled admiration or who are jealous of "discoveries" that they themselves have not unearthed.

Let this insinuation be answered once for all. Had the symptoms that Chorley pretended to perceive in Adelina Patti's voice in the year of her début been those of physical fatigue, due to strain or overwork, their pernicious effects at that delicate period of adolescence would in all probability have become permanent. She may have worked exceptionally hard for a girl of her age; but it is well known that she was never allowed to sing either when she was tired or until she became tired. No singer ever suffered less, at any period of an abnormally long career, from the effects of reaction; while at eighteen her splendid constitution, her capacity for maintaining physical and mental energy at full pressure, had already developed to a degree that those who had known her as a rather delicate child could hardly believe possible.

Fatigue, indeed! It is more than likely that Chorley imagined he was listening to another Jenny Lind—as Jenny Lind was before she went to Manuel Garcia to learn the true art of singing. If so, how did history verify Chorley's fable? Patti sang in public incessantly until he died (in 1872) and then for thirty-four years longer; in all, an active career in England of forty-five years. Prime donne who strain their voices at eighteen do not achieve this sort of record; nor do they continue to sing with a clear, beautiful tone after they have attained the age of seventy!

Imagine Patti and Grisi in the same opera, and that opera Mozart's immortal "Don Giovanni"! Such was the constellation of planets (rising and setting) that Frederick Gye sought to make the culminating feature of this unparalleled season of 1861. The excellent idea was carried into effect. Last of a series of interesting revivals for the farewell appearances of Mme. Grisi, this particular one, linking together for all time two of the most illustrious names in the history of opera, was given on July 6, 1861, with the following cast:

Don Giovanni	Monsieur Faure.
Don Ottavio	Signor Tamberlik.
Masetto	Signor Ronconi.
Leporello	Herr Formes.
Il Commendatore	Signor Tagliafico.
Donna Anna	Madame Grisi.
Donna Elvira	Mlle. Csillag.
Zerlina	Mlle. Adelina Patti.
Conductor	Mr. Costa.

For years did musical writers, members of the *vieille garde,* descant upon the glories of this great cast. In the days of the writer's youth it was still recalled with tender regret, as a treasured memory, as in a sense the operatic *clou* of the mid-Victorian era. And, indeed, it was never equalled as a galaxy of famous singers of that period. Even the fast-diminishing vocal strength of Grisi did not detract from the dramatic grandeur of her *Donna Anna.* Csillag, too, was a fine singer; she was considered the best *Donna Elvira* of her day. Faure, the renowned French baritone,—creator of rôles such as *Mephistopheles, Hamlet, Hoël,* and *Nelusko,*— was just arriving at the summit of his powers.

Then, Tamberlik was one of the most artistic and admired tenors on the stage. The celebrated Ronconi was as superb

in comedy as in tragedy. Tagliafico was also exceedingly versatile; while Carl Formes—perhaps the finest *basso profondo* that Great Britain ever heard—was an unsurpassable *Leporello.* Only the ideal *Zerlina* was wanting, and she came —came, sang and conquered!—in the person of Adelina Patti, who was now seen in the most admired of all her rôles, with the single exception of her *Rosina* in "Il Barbiere."

It was thought by some that her delicious impersonation of Mozart's heroine derived an added charm from the supreme excellence of such an unprecedented ensemble. It may well have been so. At the same time, we can imagine what it must have meant for any juvenile artist still in her teens to be instantly recognized as worthy to associate in Mozart's masterpiece with some of the greatest singers in the world. We can fancy what would have been said had her delineation fallen, in either a vocal or any other sense, below the level of theirs. As a matter of fact, it proved equal to the best, and it created a sensation such as the contemporary pen can most fitly describe.[1]

Said one reviewer[2] of the memorable *première*: "With this exquisite achievement Mlle. Patti casts all her previous triumphs into the shade." Others noted that in contra-distinction to her *Amina,* her *Lucia,* and her *Violetta,* here was something classical: a delineation beautifully symmetrical in its purity of outline, belonging, as it were, to a more exalted region of her art. For she was able to fulfil its most exigent demands in the highest perfection. It demonstrated in her at once the genuine and accomplished Mozart singer, the born exponent of the Spanish type, the fascinating *Zerlina* incarnate, the simple peasant girl whose nature, as Otto Jahn says, "is neither deep nor passionate, but light and impressionable"; who "becomes an easy prey to the elegant man of the

[1] See Appendix G.
[2] *Musical World.*

world''; whose ''vanity is flattered by his condescension''; and whose ''innocent mind is at once impressed with a conviction of his truthfulness.''

Greater by comparison with her own previous efforts, it was also declared to be superior to any portrayal of the same rôle that had been witnessed for a generation. Indeed, one critic went still farther and wrote: ''Her *Zerlina* has been pronounced the best since Malibran's; it is, however, *better* than Malibran's!'' One solitary ''croak'' only was heard in opposition to the unanimous chorus of praise, and that was uttered (of course) by Chorley, who delivered himself in the *Athenæum* of the following: ''Mlle. Patti's *Zerlina* is also much admired. But, to our thinking, the peculiar quality of her voice tells not pleasantly in Mozart's music. . . . Her acting was, in our opinion, too old and knowing'' (*sic*).

The rush to hear ''Don Giovanni'' became tremendous. Grisi sang her farewells to ''capacity,'' and, after four performances, two more had to be added at the very end of the season. In the meantime the procession of Patti nights also went on without interruption at the rate of two a week, and on July 13 the diva, as she was now universally called, scored another hit in ''Martha.'' Associated with her in Flötow's opera were Mario, Grazani, and Tagliafico, while the piquant grace and freshness of her *Lady Enrichetta* elicited unqualified expressions of delight.

Finally, on July 27, came her first appearance in Rossini's ''Barbiere di Siviglia,'' with the following remarkable cast:

Il Conte Almaviva	Signor Mario.
Figaro	Signor Ronconi.
Don Basilio	Signor Tagliafico.
Don Bartolo	Signor Ciampi.
Berta	Mme. Tagliafico.
Rosina	Mlle. Adelina Patti.

Fancy Mario, prince of tenors, still fairly in his prime, as the *Almaviva* to that enchanting *Rosina* of eighteen summers! What an experience! Alas, we can do no more than "fancy."

The furore created by this ensemble was so unparalleled that Mr. Gye was petitioned to extend the season until the middle of August, so as to accommodate a portion of the overflowing crowds that were in vain besieging the doors of Covent Garden both for Rossini's masterpiece and Mozart's. The idea was, however, found to be impracticable, because every one connected with the opera house had by now become exhausted by the prolonged excitement and work of this extraordinary season. The person least affected was the wonderful creature who was the cause of it all. But in her case Maurice Strakosch was adamant. He would not let her go on a day beyond the extra performances already agreed upon.

The tired critics were certainly not equal to a further effort. The new *Rosina* had sent them into the wildest ecstasies of delight, although, being by this time destitute of fresh superlatives, they could only draw upon the old stock and utilize them with painful reiteration. Even Chorley vied with Davison and the rest in the endeavor to do justice to what they now openly declared to be an epoch-making manifestation of genius.[1]

The sole loophole afforded by the "Barbiere" performance for the exercise of adverse critical comment was the vexed question of the particular ornaments and "changes" that Mlle. Patti introduced into her arias and duets. Here it had been a sore point for years. No matter who the vocalist, no matter how artistic or appropriate the ornamentation, the complaint of undue interference with the composer was one that the critics never failed to make where Rossini was concerned. Curiously enough, the sticklers for a literal rendering of

[1] See Appendix H.

his music were infinitely more severe and unrelenting than Rossini himself.[1] The point will be dealt with later in these pages, but meanwhile it may be confidently asserted that from first to last the alterations and additions made by Patti to the musical text of "Il Barbiere" (as subsequently also in the case of "Semiramide") were entirely approved by the composer.

The season of 1861 ultimately came to a close on August 2, "Don Giovanni" being repeated on two consecutive nights to wind up with. In all, Adelina Patti sang twenty-five times in six operas within a period of eleven weeks. Below is a list of those operas in the order of their production, with the number of performances given of each:

"La Sonnambula"	9
"Lucia di Lammermoor"	4
"La Traviata"	2
"Don Giovanni"	6
"Martha"	2
"Il Barbiere di Siviglia"	2
Total	25

To sum up the recorded impressions of this phenomenal season would be no easy matter, and it would occupy too much space to quote even the pick of the effusive utterances that appeared in print after Covent Garden had closed its doors. Suffice it to say that, the new diva having retired on her laurels, not only journalists but distinguished writers in other than musical spheres penned their various eulogies upon the achievement above recorded. Not the least noteworthy of

[1] A notable example of this puritanic sense of duty was forthcoming a couple of years after in a notice in the *Musical World* of a revival of "Il Barbiere" at Covent Garden with practically the same cast. See Appendix H (a).

these articles was one by Charles Dickens that appeared in the pages of *All The Year Round*.[1] The gifted author was but one of thousands who had figuratively but unhesitatingly flung themselves at the feet of the delightful little songstress. The whole world, indeed, was paying homage at her throne. And, be it said, she bore her honors alike then and thereafter with modesty, dignity, and grace.

[1] See Appendix I.

CHAPTER VIII

The "Queen of Song" at Her First State Concert (1861)—A Royal Selection—The Programme—Mapleson at Her Majesty's Opposes Gye—Patti at the Birmingham Festival—Dividing the National Anthem—Débuts at Dublin, Berlin, Brussels, and The Hague—Visits Pauline Lucca—Brussels Hails a "*Grande Comédienne*"—English Opinion of Patti's Acting—Higher Fees Demanded—A Gamble at Homburg and Its Consequences

THE termination of her first London season saw Adelina Patti firmly established upon an eminence of her own, standing quite apart from the lower and broader plateau that accommodated the ordinary deities of the operatic Olympus. Thanks chiefly to her incomparable talent, but also to a "fortuitous concourse of events" so shaped that at the psychological moment everything was ready to tell in her favor, the British public had placed her practically beyond the reach of rivalry. She was already the new diva. Ere long she was to be the proud possessor of a yet more distinguished and unusual sobriquet, an English one—to wit, the "Queen of Song."

Meanwhile, it was a real queen—Victoria of blessed memory—who helped to set the seal upon Patti's fame six weeks after her first appearance at Covent Garden. In this instance, as in so many others, it seemed as if the stars in their courses worked "overtime" in favor of the youthful prima donna. Half a year later the English nation was to be plunged into prolonged mourning through the sudden and premature death of the Prince Consort. In June, 1861, London was at its brightest and gayest. The Prince was alive and in good health, and, although they were not very frequent visitors at the

opera, the Queen and his Royal Highness were always well informed concerning the ability of the new singers appearing there.

But they had gone more than once to hear Mlle. Adelina Patti, and had expressed their admiration for her singing in the warmest terms. Accordingly it was no great surprise when she received through Mr. Gye the royal command to take part in the State Concert at Buckingham Palace on June 28.

A State Concert in mid-Victorian days was a very serious, not to say solemn function. The programme, as a rule, consisted largely of sacred or semi-classical pieces; only occasionally did it include operatic selections, which were to furnish the principal pabulum in later years. It must be accounted a strange coincidence that the new-comer should have been called upon to take part in the last programme that Prince Albert helped Queen Victoria to select and approve. Not a single secular item was to be in it. Would Mlle. Patti be able to sing the kind of music that was required?

When Mr. Gye put the question to Maurice Strakosch, he replied, with a smile, that her musical education had not been precisely neglected.[1] "Was church music asked for? She could sing it with the best of them. Did the Court wish for Mendelssohn? She would gladly 'oblige' with the air from 'Elijah.' In short, anything the Queen might desire."

[1] Even Chorley had to acknowledge the truth of this. In his next *Athenæum* article he made reference to the above State Concert in these terms: "It may be observed that the young lady, a few evenings since, at the Royal Concert, sang an air from Mendelssohn's "Elijah" and an offertory by Hummel, thus making evident that she affects a repertory wider than that of the three or four operatic parts parroted by hearsay tuition, on the strength of which certain of her predecessors have, for a time, deceived their public. Due credit is to be given for this, especially by the few, like ourselves, who have not been carried away by the flood of rapture which burst forth on Mlle. Patti's first performances."

Her Majesty and the Prince readily agreed to "Hear ye, Israel," and also to Hummel's "Alma Virgo," a motet for soprano solo with chorus. It was, however, stipulated that the latter should not be described as an *offertorium,* but as an "air with chorus." Music from Roman Catholic services was not openly tolerated at Court; it had to appear there under a thin veil of disguise.

The programme of this State Concert, if solid and lengthy, was undeniably interesting, and a copy of it is here reproduced:

(*ROYAL COAT OF ARMS*)

HER MAJESTY'S STATE CONCERT,

BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

June 28th, 1861.

PART THE FIRST.

Selection from "St. Paul." *Mendelssohn.*

Overture.

Chorus . . . . . "Lord! Thou alone art God."

Chorale . . . . . "To God on High."

Recit. . . . . "And the many that believed."

(Mdlle. Titiens, Mr. Santley, and Mr. Patey)

Chorus . . . . . "Now this man ceaseth not."

Recit. . . . . "And all that sat in the council."

(Mdlle. Titiens and Signor Gardoni)

Chorus . . . . . "Take him away."

Recit. . . . . "Lo! I see the heavens opened."

(Signor Gardoni)

Aria. . . . . "Jerusalem! Jerusalem!"

(Mdlle. Adelina Patti)

Recit. . . . . "Then they ran upon him."

(Signor Gardoni)

Chorus . . . . . "Stone him to death."

Recit. . . . . "And they stonèd him."

(Signor Gardoni)

Chorale . . . . . "To Thee, O Lord."
Recit. . . . . "And the witnesses."
(Mdlle. Titiens)
Chorus . . . . . "Happy and blest are they."

No. 21 in "Elijah." Air: "Hear ye, Israel." *Mendelssohn.*
(Mdlle. Adelina Patti)
"Kyrie and Gloria" (Service in C) *Beethoven.*
(Mdlle. Titiens, Miss Lascelles, Signor Giuglini, Mr. Patey, Mr. Santley, and Chorus)

PART THE SECOND.

No. 10 in "Israel." Chorus—"But as His People." *Handel.*
Nos. 8 and 9 in "Creation." Recit. and Air: "With verdure clad." *Haydn.*
(Mdlle. Titiens)
No. 2 in "Stabat." Air: "Cujus animam." *Rossini.*
(Signor Giuglini)
Air and Chorus: "Alma Virgo." *Hummel.*
(Mdlle. Adelina Patti)
Romance ("Joseph"), "A peine au sortir de l'enfance." *Méhul.*
(Signor Gardoni)
No. 6 in "Stabat." Quartette: "Sancta Mater." *Rossini.*
(Mdlle. Titiens, Miss Lascelles, Signor Giuglini, and Mr. Santley)
No. 14 in "Creation." Chorus and Trio: "The heavens are telling." *Haydn.*
(Mdlle. Titiens, Signor Gardoni, and Mr. Santley)

That the singer's reputation was enhanced by this appearance at Buckingham Palace there can be no question. It was considered an unusual honor for so young an artist to receive, and she must have requited it by singing magnificently, for the Queen never forgot the occasion. Her Majesty recalled it to Mme. Patti in after years.

The appearance of other distinguished operatic names on the same programme demands a word of explanation. During the greater part of the season of 1861 the Royal Italian Opera

had enjoyed the practical monopoly for which, as we know, Mr. Gye paid E. T. Smith £4,000. At any rate, no competitive enterprise had ventured into the field until Mr. Mapleson opened the Lyceum Theatre, on June 8, with a first-rate Italian opera company, comprising Tietjens, Alboni, Giuglini, Gardoni, Gassier, and Delle Sedie, with Arditi as conductor. This was a fairly strong combination, though for obvious reasons it could make no headway against the powerful forces intrenched at Covent Garden.

Still, Mapleson's short initial season is worthy of mention, because it enabled him to demonstrate his capacity as an impresario, and incidentally to secure the tenancy of Her Majesty's Theatre for the following year, which was expected to be exceptionally brilliant on account of the International Exhibition to be held at the Crystal Palace.[1]

After the close of her first Covent Garden season, the singer whose triumphs had made it memorable was allowed a brief holiday by the seaside to recoup her strength for the labors that lay before her. These were by no means to be insignificant, since Messrs. Gye and Strakosch had been overwhelmed with demands for her services. Among the offers was one from the Committee of the Birmingham Musical Festival, which important triennial event took place that autumn. Her terms had gone up with a jump, and a fee of 500 guineas was asked for four concerts. The Committee hesitated; but Michael Costa was the conductor of the Festival, and, what is more, the "boss" of the Committee. Patti, he insisted, *must* be engaged! And engaged she was. Prior,

[1] A similar course of procedure was to be followed twenty-six years later, when Augustus Harris gave his tentative season of Italian opera at Drury Lane, introducing the two De Reszkes, Battistini, and other fine artists. He lost £10,000 in a month over the speculation, but made such an impression that he was able to obtain the lease of Covent Garden for the following season (1888), together with the support of a large body of subscribers.

however, to singing at Birmingham, says our friend Mr. Kuhe, "she came one evening to Brighton to sing at my concert, this being her first appearance on the concert platform in England."[1]

Her success at the Birmingham Festival amply justified Costa's confidence. She did not take part in the choral works, but her name drew overflowing crowds to each of the evening concerts, and her singing was the sensational feature of the week. To what extent she had aroused curiosity is shown by the following quotation from an article in the current *Musical World:*

It may be boldly asserted, without fear of contradiction, that every person among the vast assembly awaited with anxious expectation the appearance of our recent musical importation from America—an importation in the eyes of sundry enthusiastic musicians worth all the cotton ever sent from New Orleans. . . . At length the wished-for moment arrived, and Mlle. Adelina stood upon the platform. In a moment, aye, in less, a thousand glances were levelled at her. It struck me that the first impression was one of incredulity, and those who had reported such marvels of the youthful prima donna fell at least cent. per cent. in the estimation of their fellow provincials. But this state of things did not continue long, and ere Mlle. Patti had concluded the *cabaletta* of her first air ("Ah, fors' è lui") she had worked her audience up to a state of enthusiasm. Her triumph in the air from "La Sonnambula" was even more brilliant, and excited a tempest of applause, which could not be allayed until she had accepted an encore. Again at a later concert Mlle. Patti made another stride in the affections of the Birmingham public by her rendering of the Mad Scene from "Lucia." The air was vociferously applauded and encored, but the fair artist contented herself with repeating the *cabaletta,* though she was more yielding with regard to Hook's song ("Within a mile of Edinboro toon") in Part II, and gave the whole of it a second time.

It should be understood that encores at a Birmingham Fes-

[1] "Musical Recollections," p. 155.

MARTHA, 1863

DINORAH, 1862

tival were the exception, not the rule. Sims Reeves was similarly honored at the same concerts, but he, as usual, flatly refused to "oblige." The only operatic star who shared the feminine laurels of the week with the new diva was the gifted Tietjens; and in the end it was so hard to differentiate between them that, at the final concert, the committee found itself compelled to ask the two ladies to divide the solos in "God Save the Queen." Accordingly, one sang the first verse, the other the second, and both joined in the third.

During the last three months of 1861 Mlle. Patti sang in many places, but nowhere did she meet with a more hearty reception than in Dublin. She appeared there at the Theatre Royal in November, in a round of her favorite parts, winding up with an impersonation of *Lady Enrichetta* in "Martha" that drove her admirers literally frantic with delight.[1]

That night, when she bade them farewell, the Dublin boys accorded her a terrific ovation:

> The horses were taken out of her carriage by the crowd as she left the Theatre Royal. They dragged the vehicle from the theatre to Morrison's Hotel, several mounting to the roof and others clinging to the back. The shouts of the populace followed them to their destination, and when they arrived there, they begged, or rather insisted, that Mlle. Patti would address a few words to them from the balcony. This she very graciously agreed to do, and, presenting herself on the balcony, notwithstanding the drenching rain, she thanked her Dublin friends cordially for their generous patronage, and showered upon them the bouquets she had previously received from the audience.

She left at the end of the same month for Berlin—not for Brussels, where Strakosch states that he "began his peregrinations in Europe" and "Mme. Adelina Patti sang first

[1] See Appendix J.

after her successes'' in the United Kingdom.[1] The dates leave no room for question on this point. She had been engaged to appear at the Royal Opera House in Berlin during the month of December, in a series of Italian performances, and the contract was fulfilled to the letter.

Despite the unfavorable attitude assumed toward her at the outset by the Prussian press, the enthusiasm of the public knew no bounds. Above all, King Wilhelm—the future victor of Sedan and first German Kaiser—singled himself out as her especial admirer and champion. He went to hear her each time she sang, and never failed to congratulate her in person before leaving the theatre. The irresistible Adelina was to captivate many ''crowned heads'' in her day, but among them she never found a more devoted friend than the Emperor Wilhelm I.

As usual, the Berlin critics, if they refused to bend the knee at first, ended by declaring themselves her fervent admirers, and begged her to return. As a matter of fact, the opera season in Berlin had been rather dull until her advent, and one paper, after enumerating the various singers who had appeared, mentioned ''Last, not least, Adelina Patti, the girlish vocalist, who speedily transported her English triumphs here, and by a rich combination of artistic excellences brought the season to a brilliant conclusion.''

It was at Berlin that she first met Pauline Lucca, who had achieved a startling success there the previous spring. The famous Viennese soprano, her senior only by a couple of years, had been engaged at the instigation of Meyerbeer, and was then studying with him the rôle of *Selika* in ''L'Africaine'' which she was to create also at Covent Garden in 1865.

Maurice Strakosch relates how he called upon Pauline Lucca at her modest lodgings, accompanied by his sister-in-law, and how they found her in bed, looking very juvenile and inter-

[1] ''Souvenirs d'un Impresario,'' p. 47.

esting. "Her first word was an exclamation of surprise on beholding Adelina Patti—herself a sweet and adorable creature. 'What,' exclaimed Lucca, almost involuntarily, 'can *you* be the great Patti?' " The impresario adds that "The rivalry between the two singers existed only upon the stage, for outside the theatre they were always upon the best terms of *camaraderie.*" [1] No doubt. Was it not ever thus between *prime donne?*

After Berlin came, in February, 1862, Adelina's début at Brussels. Here some early prejudice had also to be overcome, for Continental critics evidently found it hard to believe that all the fabulous praise lavished upon the new star had been wholly justified. One of them, indeed, went so far as to exhort her in the columns of an important paper "to come and finish her musical studies at the Brussels Conservatoire." Like all of the prejudiced critics, he altered his tone later on. One or two writers there were, however, who indorsed the public verdict from the first and acknowledged that "Mlle. Patti was a great singer." [2] As a pen-picture of her at this period it is worth while to quote these lines from the Brussels *Guide Musical*:

> Young, pretty, full of distinction, nature has been pleased to heap every kind of favour upon her—a rare organisation, intelligence of the highest order, and the most marvellous soprano voice one has ever heard; easy, sweet, pure, seductive, dramatic, passionate—in a word, a voice that none can hear without being profoundly moved [*impressionné*]. As though its work were not complete enough, nature has bestowed upon her the one precious quality without which no operatic artist can be wholly accomplished: it has made her a *grande comédienne.* And this merit is apt to be somewhat sacrificed at the present day, seeing that the art of the come-

[1] "Souvenirs d'un Impresario," pp. 49–50.
[2] See Appendix K.

dian seems to be interpreted in the wrong spirit with incredible persistency by the majority of the ladies and gentlemen now engaged in the delineation of the lyric drama.

The notable assertion that Adelina Patti was a *grande comédienne* at nineteen ought not to be passed over without some further consideration. To begin with, it was absolutely true. The Belgian writer did no more than echo the opinion of most of those leading critics who were acknowledged to be candid and unbiased judges of her talent at this period of her development. Comedy was then her *forte,* and when at its best her acting in that particular line deserved the adjective *grande.*

To say this is not, however, to imply that Patti was yet a great actress, even in the sense that the term might be applied to an operatic singer. When Davison first saw her as *Violetta,* he declared her to be "neither a Lind nor a Rachel." Neither did he, in all probability, expect such a combination from a girl who was then only a trifle over eighteen. Nevertheless, he admired her because she was "something so genuine, piquant, original, and attractive." He added, nevertheless, that her impersonation was more "elaborately finished" than any that he could remember, while "as a piece of acting it must be pronounced consummate."

Everybody did not agree with Davison about her acting in serious parts. There were never two opinions, however, concerning her extraordinary natural talent as a *comédienne*; nor can there be any question that she had grown, during the second and third decades of her career, to be a superb all-round actress. The important point is that the serious side of her histrionic genius took longer to develop. Those who witnessed her early performances at Covent Garden were wont to speak of flashes of dramatic power which surprised and dazzled. Those were the moments when she was capable of grasping the more profound emotions of a dramatic situ-

ation; for with her peculiar temperament the ability to understand and feel apparently engendered the ability to express. The complete understanding of a tragic rôle did not come until later on.

But the "*grande comédienne*" she indisputably was—first, last, and all the time. From childhood upward, her sense of humor, her spirit of mischief, her love of drollery and of fun, had been allowed unrestricted sway. To those qualities she added her extraordinary gift of mimicry—not mere talent for imitation, but an intuitive faculty for faithfully reproducing the manner or style characteristic of whatever she saw or heard done by another person. The combination enabled her, when upon the stage, especially in such parts as *Rosina* and *Zerlina*, to bring out to the fullest extent the *vis comica* that had been born in her, and to manifest it in her restless, romping gaiety and delightful by-play.

She possessed, when a very young girl, a singularly true sense of proportion; moreover, it never failed her. The proper restraint and self-control were invariably exercised at the right moment, and apparently without need for forethought. Hence the freedom, the ease, the *laisser-aller* which imparted to all that she did, both as singer and actress, the character and the effect of pure improvisation. No other lyric artist that I have ever seen possessed this supreme gift in anything like the same degree.

Finally, there was the advantage of her rare command, when a comparative child, of the technique of the stage. From the time she first entered upon her operatic career, she seemed able to depict her various romantic heroines with an impulse that was always truthful, unforced, and appropriate. Her acting came to her as naturally as her singing. She could convey emotions of every type with an expressive force that revealed itself alike in gesture, in facial play, and in the most subtle shades of vocal nuance.

What she still needed in the early sixties was actual experience—experience of life, experience in the theatre. This, however, was not to be vouchsafed her in adequate measure until a few more years had passed.

Before returning to England in the spring of 1862, Mlle. Patti visited Holland, and was accorded a splendid reception at Amsterdam and The Hague. In the latter city an Italian company was performing opera under the management of one Merelli, by whom the latest star in the operatic firmament was courageously engaged at 1250 francs (£50) a night. When, however, the King of Holland sent his chamberlain to secure her services for a concert at the Royal Palace, Merelli saw his opportunity and raised the terms to 3000 francs (£120).

According to Strakosch, this sum appeared enormous to the chamberlain, who asked to be allowed to think the matter over. Ultimately, of course, the fee had to be paid; but the same authority assures us that "the Dutch Cabinet was summoned to consider the question, and only after a Council of Ministers had been held did the King accede to Merelli's terms."[1] *Se non è vero, è ben trovato!*

During her stay at The Hague, the director of the Théâtre-Italien in Paris, M. Calzado, despatched a special envoy to engage Mlle. Patti forthwith for a few performances. Her manager asked the same terms as she was then receiving; but £50 a night proved too much for M. Calzado's purse, and he declined to engage her. In the following season he thought better of it, and the diva was secured; only he then had to pay her 1500 francs (£60) a night. Twenty-five years later she was receiving (on her American tour) nearly twenty times that sum.

When she sang in Paris under M. Bagier, Calzado's suc-

[1] "Souvenirs d'un Impresario," p. 50.

cessor, her terms were again raised on a sliding scale to 2000 francs (£80) a representation for the first year, 2500 francs (£100) for the second, and 3000 francs (£120) for the third. Beyond this figure, as far as the French capital is concerned, they were never known to go. It is noteworthy, however, that, owing to Calzado's hesitation in the first instance, her début in Paris was deferred for a whole year.

Strakosch was not altogether wrong when he attached "extreme importance to these details regarding the fees paid" to Adelina Patti. He considered that "operatic stars, no matter how indispensable they might be, ought to content themselves with reasonable terms," and attributed to their exorbitant demands all the catastrophes that had recently befallen the Italian opera houses at London, Paris, St. Petersburg, and even New York.[1]

At the same time, he was anxious to prove that one prima donna at least was worth the high price asked for her performances. The opportunity came when M. Blanc, the director of the Casino at Homburg,—the Monte Carlo of that day,—hesitated to concede the £120 a night named by Maurice Strakosch. M. Blanc was a wealthy man, but a prudent manager. The auditorium at the Casino was of limited size, and there was a chance of his losing money by each representation. Strakosch made him an offer.

"If you like," said he, "we will not fix any *cachet* at all. You shall charge a louis for every seat, and give Adelina Patti half the receipts. That half is to be regarded as the figure of her subsequent *cachets.*"

M. Blanc thoughtfully argued that the high price of a louis per seat would keep away a great many people, and that the fair artist was very likely to sing either for nothing or for a ridiculous sum, not only once, but on each succeeding appearance. Strakosch, however, insisted, and M. Blanc duly

[1] 'Souvenirs d'un Impresario," p. 52.

accepted a proposition that seemed entirely favorable to him.

The result proved the exact reverse of what the careful manager had anticipated. The little theatre was crammed with people at a louis a head, and the total receipts amounted to £400, half of which went to Mlle. Patti. She was afterward paid £200 each night she sang; while M. Blanc had no cause for complaint, inasmuch as his expenses amounted to £120 and he was able to pocket a net profit of £80. At the came time, he was paying his star what was then looked upon as an enormous fee.

This was only one incident out of many tending to show that Patti was, from the beginning of her European career, an exception to the rule mentioned by her brother-in-law. Instead of loss, she brought substantial gain to the various managers who were lucky enough to secure her. No matter how high the terms she asked,—and they mounted steadily year by year until they ultimately reached figures never before approached in operatic history,—it could never be asserted that Adelina Patti did not earn her money, and even leave her manager with something to spare.

The subject of her earnings will come up again from time to time in course of this volume. The huge sums that Patti made have always constituted a fascinating topic; for in this, as in many other respects, her record is unique. Let us not, however, anticipate. The important fact to be noted at this juncture is that during her first year in Europe she netted a larger amount than any other prima donna then before the public, and established in the operatic world a new basis for the calculation of a diva's fees.

CHAPTER IX

Opera in the Great Exhibition Year (1862)—The Struggle between Gye and Mapleson—Patti's Reappearance at Covent Garden—Revivals of "Don Pasquale" and "Dinorah"—Thirty-four Patti Nights—The Strakosch Plans—Début in Paris—The French Masters and the New Diva—Triumphs at Vienna—"Mobbing" a Prima Donna—Hanslick's Prediction and Its Fulfilment—First European "Interview"

LONG before the conclusion of Mlle. Patti's first European tour, preparations had been in progress upon a scale of exceptional magnitude for the London season of the "Great Exhibition Year" of 1862. Opera was expected, as a matter of course, to profit hugely by the abnormal influx of visitors. The Covent Garden monopoly, already partly broken down, was to end its brief existence altogether; for James Henry Mapleson had succeeded in obtaining a lease of Her Majesty's Theatre, and would henceforward be in a position to offer his powerful rival a strenuous and effective opposition.

It was the beginning of a protracted series of battles between the two impresarios. But of all their struggles for supremacy, their campaigns of disastrous competition in the operatic field, this was to prove the keenest and most severe. They manœuvred for position with the skill and cunning of two masters at a game of chess—each on the lookout for a weak spot in the other's opening, each eager if possible to possess himself of the other's queen. But the queens in this instance refused to be moved into danger. If Mr. Gye could not contrive (though he tried hard) to win Tietjens from her allegiance, Mr. Mapleson certainly found that he stood no better chance of getting hold of Patti.

An operatic prospectus in those days wore the complexion

of a political manifesto. The language of the rival documents now issued was of the most inflated and pretentious order. Each manager strove to outdo the other in deadly earnestness and strength of persuasive eloquence. Each apparently entertained a solemn conviction that the honor of the country—not to mention the fate of the International Exhibition—depended exclusively upon the prosperity of these operatic institutions. The following paragraph from Mr. Gye's prospectus provides a fair sample:

> It will naturally be a source of pride and gratification to the musical amateurs of this country to know that among the wonders and sights of London the opera will not suffer by comparison with that of other great capitals, but, on the contrary, that the general and received opinion will be confirmed by our guests that, whether the individual talent of its members or the perfection of its general ensemble be considered, the Royal Italian Opera stands pre-eminent among all similar establishments. To maintain, therefore, the reputation of the Royal Italian Opera, every effort will assuredly be directed and such arrangements made as will tend to secure a most brilliant season.

Covent Garden opened its doors in April, but Mr. Gye never played his strong cards during the early weeks of the season. He always found it a profitable plan to whet the appetite of the public by keeping back his principal attractions for a while. It was not, therefore, until May 5 that Mlle. Patti made her appearance. The event was heralded with much fuss and invested with all possible attractiveness; but, as a matter of fact, opera-goers were simply pining to hear their favorite again, and no special efforts were needed to work them up to the pitch of excitement that had marked the last month of the preceding season.

"La Sonnambula" was, almost as a matter of course, chosen for the *rentrée*, the house being crowded from floor to ceiling.

The general opinion was that the youthful *cantatrice* had made more definite improvement as an actress than as a vocalist. Beyond a slight increase of volume no particular change was noted in her voice, though her singing evoked the same intense admiration and delight as before. Experience, however, had wrought a beneficial effect upon her stage work, and the verdict of the press generally was again enthusiastic in the extreme.[1]

The extraordinary scenes of the previous summer were now reënacted with undiminished fervor. Patti nights were once more the rage, drawing enormous audiences regularly twice and sometimes three times a week. The same round of operas in steady succession furnished the bill for more than a couple of months. Visitors to the Exhibition, flocking to London from all parts of the world, made a point of including in their pilgrimage an expensive night at Covent Garden, so that they might be able to relate that they had seen and heard the celebrated Patti.

During May and June the chief attraction was "Don Giovanni." It was not given with quite the same wonderful cast as in 1861; still, there were only two changes—a Mme. Penco replacing Grisi as *Donna Anna*, while Ciampi was now the *Masetto* instead of Ronconi. Concerning the *Zerlina* the *Daily Telegraph* had this to say:

> If, to follow up the poetic fancy of some German critic, "Don Giovanni" is intended to typify the restless search for abstract beauty in its highest development of an enthusiast for art, Mlle. Patti's *Zerlina* may be taken as a type of woman's nature, ever engaged in some hopeless attempt to reconcile duty with delight. Never, we imagine, has the struggle between the village maiden's passive affection for her boorish bridegroom, and the coquette's admiration for the gallant suitor who has fascinated her with his easy and condescending grace, been so truthfully or so charmingly por-

[1] See Appendix L.

trayed. Indeed, we doubt if any impersonation so exquisitely fresh, spontaneous, and natural as Mlle. Patti's *Zerlina* has ever been witnessed on the operatic stage; and it is in this characteristic, quite irrespectively of the lady's bright voice and faultless singing, that lies the secret of its infinite charm.

A brilliant revival of "Lucia" on June 7 was especially noteworthy for the début in Great Britain of the famous German tenor Wachtel, in the part of *Edgardo*; also the first appearance at Covent Garden as *Enrico* of the talented baritone Delle Sedie—a finished singer and, in later years, an admirable teacher. On July 12 Donizetti's comic opera, "Don Pasquale," which had not been heard at this house for seven years, was freshly mounted for Mlle. Patti, with Mario as *Ernesto,* Delle Sedie as the *Dottore,* and Ciampi as *Don Pasquale.* Of the new *Norina* the *Times* wrote:

Such was the vivacity, such the intelligence, such (to use a term for which we have no English equivalent) the *esprit* of her acting, that since the incomparable assumption of Mme. Grisi, when Mme. Grisi was in her prime, no such piquant, attractive, and irresistible *Norina* has been witnessed. . . . At the end of the opera—in place of the ordinary *finale*—Mlle. Patti introduced a valse in the "bravura" style, a composition which, alike elegant and effective, was, in the hands of the always ready and versatile young artist, a singularly brilliant display.

A still greater hit, however, was that achieved by Mlle. Patti on August 5 in "Dinorah." Meyerbeer's pastoral opera had been made familiar already to habitués of the Royal Italian Opera by Miolan-Carvalho; but never before had it been given with such a cast as this:

Dinorah	Mlle. Patti.
Una Capraia	Mme. Rudersdorff.
Un Capraio	Mme. Didiée.
Hoël	M. Faure (his original character).

Un Cacciatore	Signor Tagliafico.
Un Mietitore	Signor Neri-Baraldi.
Corentino	Signor Gardoni.

It was too late in the season to reap the full benefit of this success, only one repetition being possible. But the critics, with the single exception of Chorley (who had yet to be converted), uttered pæans of praise.[1] They were particularly delighted with the freshness and originality of Patti's conception, which differed almost entirely from Miolan-Carvalho's. Chorley was an ardent and avowed admirer of the French prima donna, who was the original *Marguerite* of his beloved "Faust," and a charming artist to boot. But when, two seasons later, comparisons between Adelina Patti and Miolan-Carvalho in the part of *Marguerite* became unavoidable, there occurred a very decided change in Chorley's attitude toward the younger artist. It will be referred to in due course.

Reviews of the season of 1862 indicate that it was, from a financial standpoint, one of the most successful given during Mr. Gye's régime. For that epoch, it was by no means remarkable as presenting a constellation of really distinguished singers. In the following year, indeed, the impresario found himself compelled by the ever-increasing competition at Her Majesty's to considerably strengthen his ensemble. Still, in 1862 Adelina Patti and the Exhibition between them "did the trick." From the beginning of May until the middle of August the opera house on Patti nights was sold out.

Finally, for August 15 it was announced that, to wind up the season in becoming fashion, Mlle. Patti would take her first "benefit" at Covent Garden and appear in a special programme. It was thus advertised:

The performance will consist of the Great Scene from Meyerbeer's opera of "Dinorah," in which Mlle. Patti will sing the celebrated

[1] See Appendix M.

"Shadow" song; Rossini's opera "Il Barbiere," ending with the Lesson Scene, in which Mlle. Patti will sing the "Echo" song; and also (for the first and only time) Bishop's favourite air of "Home, sweet home."

That "*only* time" was assuredly a master stroke. Had Mr. Gye limited himself to saying "first time" (since for him Covent Garden was the sole temple of music that existed), accuracy would have been achieved at the cost of the merely banal. But "only time," as a forecast of Adelina Patti's association with "Home, sweet home," was an exploit the Micawber-like sweep of which can only be appreciated at its true value now, after the lapse of half-a-century. The "benefit" was nevertheless a huge triumph, and fitly terminated a season of even harder work than the previous one. Here are the figures, showing in what operas and how many times Mlle. Patti appeared, without counting her benefit:

"Don Giovanni"	10
"La Sonnambula"	8
"Il Barbiere"	8
"Lucia"	3
"Don Pasquale"	2
"Dinorah"	2
"La Traviata"	1
Total	34

Three months later a London morning paper gave out the following announcement:

We are informed that this distinguished vocalist [Mlle. Patti] will be unable, after the present tour, to appear in the British provinces again for the next three years, having made engagements extending over the period for London and some of the leading Continental cities, which we have reason to believe will be as follows: Paris,

during November and December, 1862, and January, 1863; Vienna, February, March, and April, 1863; London, May, June, and July, 1863; Vienna, September and October, 1863, where Meyerbeer's "Dinorah" is to be produced for the first time, the eminent composer having selected Mlle. Patti for the occasion. For the season of November, December, 1863, and January, 1864, the "little lady" returns to Paris; and in February, March, and April, 1864, makes her début at Naples in a new opera written expressly for her by Verdi, who will most probably select Victor Hugo's famous story, "Esmeralda," for the subject, a character admirably suited to the dramatic specialties of Mlle. Patti. During the summer season of 1864 she is again to form one of the company at the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden, and in September and October following will appear at Madrid, concluding this remarkable series of engagements in Paris during the months of November and December, 1864, and January, 1865.

Considerable interest is taken by numerous admirers in London in reference to Mlle. Patti's début at the Italian Opera, Paris, on the 10th of November next, as *Amina* in "La Sonnambula," so much so that we hear of arrangements being in progress for an excursion by train and steamer, at a five-guinea fare there and back, to include a ticket of admission to the opera on the particular night and allowing five days in Paris. We are inclined to think that few vocalists of the present day are likely to win greater favour from a Parisian public than the highly gifted Adelina Patti.

The above reads uncommonly like the outcome of what to-day would be termed an "interview" with Maurice Strakosch. Its prophetic content was sufficiently extensive for it to have proceeded from the managerial brother-in-law, whose condescending touch is delightfully exhibited in the remark that brushes the "British provinces" aside for a period of three years. Maurice knew how to *faire l'article* in the French as well as the English sense, but his vaticinations were often as inaccurate as his chronicles.

As a matter of fact, Mlle. Patti was singing again at

Birmingham in the autumn of 1864, as we shall see; while the prediction with regard to the new opera by Verdi was never to be realized. The Italian master wrote no "Esmeralda," nor did Mlle. Patti ever essay the character in any other save Fabio Campana's opera of the same name. The "excursion" idea was a gem. At five guineas a head, including a stall at the opera to hear Patti, it might almost have been considered cheap.

Great was the sensation aroused in Paris by the long-deferred first appearance of Adelina Patti. Her visit began in November, 1862, and lasted until the following February. The furore started with her début in the inevitable "Sonnambula"; it rose gradually to fever-heat, and it never once cooled until after her "benefit" in "Don Giovanni." When she had been in the French capital a fortnight the correspondent of a leading London paper wrote: "About Mlle. Patti's position in Paris there can no longer be a question. She is adopted with one voice, and is the chief topic of conversation in every circle."

The Emperor and Empress of the French took a particular fancy to the youthful diva, and honored her by going six times to the Théâtre des Italiens during her stay. On the benefit night they invited her to come to the Imperial *loge,* and presented her with a magnificent bracelet of diamonds and emeralds. So great was the crush at that performance that collisions between the crowds and the police occurred in the surrounding streets. Stalls easily fetched anything from 100 to 200 francs apiece—a high price in those days.

The famous masters of that golden period of French musical art vied with one another in their compliments. Berlioz, Auber, and Gounod were especially captivated by the *"délicieuse cantatrice."* The impulsive Hector wrote in one of his *Avis aux lecteurs:* "Do you wish to see charm united with

IN PARIS, 1862

naïveté, naturalness with grace?—the goddess of youth, Hebe in person? If so, go to the Théâtre-Italien on the nights when Mlle. Patti sings!"

The composer of "Les Diamants de la Couronne" (in which opera she was to find one of her most graceful rôles) uttered a charming *mot* on the night of her début. Asked his opinion of her, Auber replied: "I was twenty years old throughout the entire performance, which is exactly sixty years less than the truth."

Gounod asked her to persuade Mr. Gye to mount "Faust" at Covent Garden (it was done in the following season, though not until after Mr. Mapleson had produced it at Her Majesty's), and added: "I can conceive no more ideal Marguerite than you will make."

After Paris, Vienna. It was on February 28, 1863,—a few days after her twentieth birthday,—that she made her initial courtesy at the Karl Theater in the part of *Amina,* and abundantly verified the expectations of a public that had waited for her impatiently for a year and a half. The season in the Austrian capital was under the direction of Merelli, the impresario of her earlier visits to Holland and Germany. He now paid her £80 a performance, and the success of his Viennese venture may be gathered from the fact that on the termination of his two months' season he pocketed a net profit of £4000.

Nothing like it had ever happened in the operatic annals of the gay city on the Danube.[1] Certainly no event was so vividly recalled there for years as the début of the now world-renowned Patti. A circumstance that added to the brilliancy of the occasion was the fact that her *Elvino* was the great tenor Giuglini. It was the first time that the two famous artists had sung together; and, although Giuglini's voice was

1 See Appendix N, letter of Dr. Julius Wagner.

getting rather worn, he was still wonderful enough to be a fitting companion for his juvenile partner. Between them they raised a tempest of applause the echoes of which resounded in every corner of Europe.

The audience appear to have fairly lost their heads. A French critic, who had just previously witnessed some of the unprecedented scenes in Paris, wrote that they were left far behind by the veritable *fanatisma* which broke out in the Karl Theatre on that February night. "The public seemed fascinated; the *soirée* was, for 'la divina Patti,' one long and noisy ovation. Recalls, encores, wreaths, every manifestation of delight pushed to the farthest extreme, were lavished upon her." The Viennese press was no less demonstrative.

The excitement gradually pervaded the entire community. Large crowds used to wait for the *hübsche Sängerin* and follow her wherever she went. Indeed, their desire to get near her was so uncontrollable that one day she had a narrow escape from being injured. A foreign lady residing in Vienna told the story in a letter, from which the following is an extract:

Vienna, April 9, 1863.

Mlle. Patti sang on Sunday, at eleven o'clock, at the Augustinerkirche, in the chorus of the Mass. Such crowds had forced their way into the church, at an early hour, that several persons fainted, and had to be carried out. During the service, too, a countless multitude assembled before the Augustinergasse, to await the moment when the celebrated singer should come out, and proceed to her carriage, which was waiting near at hand.

Scarcely had she made her appearance at the door, when the expectant crowd gathered round her with enthusiastic cheers, and so overwhelmed her with marks of their admiration, that the terrified girl, half fainting, and with imploring mien, strove to escape. While she was making the attempt, the friends who accompanied her were forced from her side, and thus nothing remained for her to do but to flee into the nearest house, the *hôtel* of Prince Palffy.

Fortunately, the maid of the Countess Ferrariz Zichi, who resides in the *hôtel,* had beheld the whole scene from the windows. Hurrying to meet the affrighted artist on the steps, she opened the door of the corridor, and, quickly closing it again, led Mlle. Patti into the apartments of the Countess.

But the enthusiastic crowd had followed close upon the heels of the fair artist, and, running wildly up and down the steps, very nearly forced open the door. The mistress of the mansion, the Princess Palffy, was at last obliged to make her appearance, and her impressive words of warning finally succeeded in prevailing upon the ungallant multitude to retire in an orderly manner.

Meanwhile Mlle. Patti was conducted into the drawing-room, where, thanks to the hospitable attention of the Countess's family, she recovered so far, after a short time, from the unexpected and boisterous homage paid her, that her friends and attendants, who had hastened to rejoin her, were able to convey her without further risk to her carriage, and drive home.

Such attentions, novel as they must have been at that time, were by no means of uncommon occurrence in the later career of the artist, albeit they seldom grew quite so unpleasant, for the reason that after this better precautions were taken to protect her from being mobbed by over-demonstrative crowds. The experience here related provided a salutary lesson and one that was not quickly forgotten.

The "crowned heads" were nearly as obtrusive as the crowds. Wherever she went they sought to bask in the sunshine of her presence. Following the example of his cousin William the First of Prussia, the Emperor Francis Joseph took particular care never to miss a Patti performance. He would sit, sometimes in the large Imperial box facing the stage, sometimes in a smaller box at the side, and at least once each evening he would go behind the scenes to visit the youthful artist and offer his congratulations. He also conferred upon her an order set in brilliants, which she liked better than the compliments. Adelina naturally prized that sort of thing,

and the time was to come when she would possess a large collection of royal decorations.

Mention has already been made of her friendship with Dr. Eduard Hanslick, the famous Viennese critic. It dated from this visit. From the first he formed a very exalted estimate of her talents, and foretold for her career an even greater future than she had so far achieved. Although "a man with prejudices," Hanslick made no mistake in this instance. He expressed the opinion that one day she would be a remarkable actress as well as a great singer. Eleven years later, in his book, "Die Moderne Oper," he wrote an essay on Meyerbeer, in course of which there occurs a singularly interesting study of Patti's *Dinorah*.[1] Here he carries his prediction a point farther, for he thinks "she will remain the last great singer who, after being reared in the severe school of Rossinian virtuosity and Bellinian *bel canto* and there equipped for the highest achievements of Italian vocal art, yet turned to the performance of modern dramatic tasks."

Those words were written in 1874. But even then the world was not prepared to regard Adelina Patti as an ideal interpreter of dramatic rôles; and perhaps the world at that moment was right. Her acting was ever advancing to a higher level, but it was still only in her lighter parts that it could be considered on a par with her supreme art as a singer. Another two years, however, were to see the complete fulfilment of at any rate that part of Hanslick's opinion which he expressed when she first went to Vienna. The revelation came in 1876 with the production of "Aïda" and her creation of the title-rôle at Covent Garden. Without anticipating the story of that performance (which the present writer witnessed), it may be said here that in the part of *Aïda* Patti's genius for the stage stood in a new light. She had done nothing at all like it before.

[1] See Appendix O.

It showed an astounding development of picturesque force, of declamatory and histrionic power, punctuated by moments of real tragic intensity. It unfolded hitherto latent capacity for the delineation of passion, grief, and despair. It denoted a transition not less extraordinary, in its way, than that marked by the opera itself in the change from Verdi's second to his third "manner"—a musical advance that was to culminate in the twentieth-century school of Young Italy. So the artist went forward with the composer. In his onward march he was to have the coöperation of the last lineal descendant of Catalani, Pasta, and Grisi.

And thus the whole of Hanslick's prophecy came true, for with Patti the royal line of "great singers" ended. She has had no successor!

It was during her Continental tour of 1862–63 that she furnished material for the first interview with a prima donna ever published in a European newspaper. The methods of the American interviewer were then comparatively unknown in Europe. Strangely enough, the innovation did not come to London direct, but arrived by way of Paris. It appeared first in the *Figaro* early in February, 1863, and a translation duly appeared in the *Musical World,* whose editor seems to have regarded it as a welcome novelty. The text of the brief dialogue is appended—with some apology for its naïveté. An American journalist of to-day would, of course, have contrived to make better "copy" of it:

"Patti!" exclaims the Parisian *Figaro.* You are introduced to Patti, and find that she is a little girl of nineteen, who looks fourteen—a child who might have a doll and know nothing of life. "Do you ever read the newspapers?"

"No; I never see them," she replies. "If there is anything nice, my brother-in-law reads it to me. If not, I don't hear of it."

"What do you read, then?"

"Thackeray, Dickens—nearly all the English authors."

"Do you like Paris?"

"Yes, but I like London better. The French are changeable, I am told; whereas the English—"

"Well?"

"When they have taken a liking to you it lasts for ever. I was much quieter in London; and if you only knew how fond I am of quiet. Here people talk so fast and so much, it confuses me."

"How can that confuse you?—you who can speak English, French, Italian, and Spanish equally well?"

"Not being accustomed to it, I suppose."

"But how do you amuse yourself in London?"

"I talk to Miss Alice, who is always with me." [1]

"Well, Miss Alice is in Paris now, and is going with you to Vienna."

"Certainly; but—"

"I suppose you do not feel at home; that is what annoys you?"

"Exactly so."

"Shall you sing much at Vienna?"

"I don't know."

"How is that? Don't you know what your engagements are?"

"No; I never know. My papa arranges everything. As for me, they tell me I must start, and I start; they tell me to sing, and I sing."

"And Italy, when are you going there? It is not its fault that it is not your native land."

"Oh, I am very sorry I have not been there already. I shall be delighted to see Italy."

"And you also, shall you not, Miss Alice?"

"Miss Alice" (says *Figaro*) blushes, her blue eyes turn pale (!), then a smile appears on her face, thirty-two teeth glitter between her lips, and she murmurs (at last), "Oh, yes, sir!" And the interview ends.

Then adds the *Musical World:*

The above mode of depicting the character of the great singer of

[1] "Miss Alice" was her *demoiselle de compagnie.*

the day through an ordinary conversation, well arranged, appears to us an immense improvement on the old-fashioned memoir. The *Figaro's* dialogue gives a much better notion of what Mlle. Patti is really like than any of Mr. Silvy's photographs. In future, when this method has become generally known, ladies of celebrity, instead of being asked to sit for their portraits to photographers, will be asked to talk for their portraits to writers, and the great art will be to make them talk characteristically and well, as in photography the great art is to get them into a good, characteristic pose.

It may be open to question, nevertheless, whether the foregoing provides an absolutely reliable pen-picture of Adelina at this period of her existence. Were it so, it would certainly not afford a very flattering glimpse of her mentality or her conversational powers at the age of twenty. The probabilities are that she had been warned to say as little as possible "for publication." For she was now a girl no longer, but a full-grown woman, capable of thinking, feeling, and acting with a sense of responsibility. She might still indulge in the whims and caprices of a girl. She was always to indulge them, more or less, when she cared. But there was nothing redolent of the child about them now; nor were they allowed to interfere with the *convenances* of the theatre, where *les affaires sont les affaires.*

The reader is fairly entitled to ask, therefore, what Adelina Patti was really like at this time—not as she appeared to a casual visitor at a Parisian hotel, but as she was in her home life, or so much of home as she could be said actually to enjoy amid the exigencies of a professional career that kept her almost constantly "on the move." Well, certain facts and details are available, and they are worth setting forth at the beginning of another chapter.

CHAPTER X

Adelina Patti's Home Life at Clapham (1863–68)—The Secret of Her Perennial Youth—The Study of Health and Art—Regular Habits—Avoidance of Rehearsals; Her Substitute—Daily Vocal Practice—Her First Sweetheart—The Gossip of Fräulein Lauw—Revenge in the Court of Chancery—Adelina an Unwilling Plaintiff; an Interesting Affidavit—Failure of a Mean Trick—Renewed Triumphs at Covent Garden and an Artistic Advance—Chorley and the Rossinian Embellishments—Four New Characters—The Season's Harvest

THE real beginning of Patti's home life in England must be dated from her return to London—after her triumphal visit to Vienna—for the season of 1863. An intimate friend had advised the family not to stay at a hotel in town, but to live in one of the suburbs. The "family"—which now included, in addition to "Papa" and "Maurice," a German *demoiselle de compagnie* of whom we shall have something to say directly—accepted the advice and took, to begin with, part of a house at 22 High Street, Clapham. There they formed a simple but comfortable ménage.

It should be noted that Adelina's mother never came to England. Mme. Barili-Patti, as she was generally called, at about this period, left New York and returned to her native city, Rome, where she settled down and remained until she died some few years later. Her part in this story is practically limited to the dramatic prologue in which she enacted a rôle of such supreme importance. Her influence over her famous daughter did not extend beyond early childhood, and in some measure—indirectly, perhaps, rather than otherwise—as one of the models whom the tiny singer had sought to imitate. For she undoubtedly heard her mother in New York

in several of her operas, though not for long. It used to be said that Mme. Barili-Patti's voice had never survived the strain of the "Norma" performance in which she sang on the night that Adelina was born. But the statement was not true. What is beyond question, however, is that the mother and daughter saw very little of each other in after years.

To return to Clapham. The ménage remained at High Street only until the end of the season. They had fallen in love with the neighborhood, but they required more room, and if possible, a big garden. Both were found for them by the same intimate friend, and less than half-a-mile away. The new place (which they took for three months every season for five years, beginning in 1864) was known as Pierrepoint House, and situated in Atkins' Road, Clapham Park. It stood in a secluded spot—a quaint, old-world "haven of rest," with a spacious garden, a lawn, some spreading trees—a veritable paradise where feathered songsters of every English tribe might gather in the spring of the year to greet their new queen.

Clapham in 1863 was very different from the Clapham we know to-day. It was sufficiently near the metropolis to be called a suburb; yet, like any spot that was half-an-hour's drive from Charing Cross, it was far enough away to be described as "out of town." The railway had barely begun to invade its privacy; there were as yet no trams, no tubes, no motor-omnibuses—no public vehicles, in fact, but the four-horse bus that used to make the journey to and from the City or Regent Street four times a day. There was no noise save the crack of the driver's whip, the occasional rattle of carriage and coach wheels, the (fortunately) still rarer blast of the mail-guard's horn. Clapham Park could still boast something of the character of a real park, while the neighboring common harbored nothing noisier than nursemaids, babies, and cricketers.

The fresh air and remote tranquillity of this suburban retreat amply compensated, in the minds of the Patti household, for the rather long drive to and from Covent Garden. At the moment when we cast a discreet glance behind the domestic veil it was the spring of the year 1863, and the Clapham gardens were making ready to put on their summer attire. Our heroine had already learned to appreciate the simple beauties of an English home. She revelled in the open air and the quiet charm of the place, and it was here that she first acquired her taste for such enjoyments after the bustle of travelling and the strenuous work of the opera house.

A more placid existence than that which Mlle. Patti led it would have been unreasonable for a prima donna to demand. Weather permitting, she went out riding or else strolled in the garden every morning, taking just as much exercise as was good for her.[1] She did her chief vocal practising early, soon after the *petit déjeuner,* before going out. She had a healthy appetite, took her meals regularly, slept well—in short, led the most healthful life imaginable, and never knew what it was to have a day's illness.

With her strong constitution and hardy physique, it was natural that her voice should continue to grow in volume and power. Yet at this time she seemed very little older in appearance than when she first went to England. A close friend who knew her during the Clapham period once told the writer that "she had not changed a bit, but looked and acted as much like a girl in her teens as ever." Had she already acquired her wonderful secret of remaining young? Perhaps. Or was it not rather no secret at all, but the combined outcome of the various conditions and attributes here

[1] She was very fond of riding. She had taken lessons and become an excellent horsewoman; but after her first marriage she was no longer allowed to indulge in this energetic pastime.

enumerated, like the fostering influences that go to the creation of the queen bee? One thing is certain: she herself did not know.

No artist of the theatre (with the exception, maybe, of Sarah Bernhardt) was ever asked so frequently if she could describe her elixir or write down her recipe for preserving a youthful aspect long after the age when most women begin to look old. Of course, she always denied that there was any such thing, and therein told the honest truth. But in searching for the real cause she often omitted to lay sufficient stress on the beneficial effect of her "simple life" at Clapham. She would try to account for it (just to satisfy her questioners) in all sorts of ways. Once she told a Parisian interviewer that the principal reason, in her opinion, lay in "her comparatively strict mode of living after she had passed the age of forty!"[1]

"Up to forty," she said, "I stinted myself in nothing. I ate and lived as I chose. After forty, however, I became more strict. Since then I eat no red meat and drink only white wine and soda. When I feel weak, a glass of champagne picks me up. I never touch spirits or liqueurs. My diet consists of light food and white meat and vegetables. I always sleep with the window wide open in summer and partly open in winter, so as not to get the cold air straight on my face. I never get to bed early, hardly ever before half-past twelve or one. A severe hygiene and an elaborate toilet before bed are absolutely necessary to any woman who does not want to get fat. That is my only secret of health."

So much for the gastronomic and hygienic explanation. It was no doubt correct, as far as it went; but it scarcely went far enough. The illustrious singer, to be quite fair to herself and her early guardians, ought to have made reference

[1] From the *Echo de Paris*, May 21, 1907.

to her consistently regular life when a young girl, to her quiet, peaceful existence at the Clapham villa—above all, to the extraordinary care that had always been exercised to spare her unnecessary or excessive fatigue and every description of mental worry or annoyance. Of the latter kind only one instance, during the epoch now under review, is known to have occurred wherein her sensibilities might have been pained (though it is not altogether sure that they were). To that incident we shall come presently.

"There is a divinity doth hedge a"—diva; and, from the time she won the title, Patti enjoyed its full rights and privileges, in private no less than in public life. Never did prima donna encounter richer opportunities for enjoying the good things of this world, or indulge in them more discreetly, more sparingly.

While living at Clapham she completed her education, which, as we are aware, had been somewhat neglected during her busy childhood. Impelled by keen desire for knowledge, she gladly seized every chance to study and learn. She improved not only her language, but her technical musicianship, where there was also lost ground to be made up. (The latter purpose was never wholly accomplished, for she was not able to read music at sight more than tolerably well, nor to play the piano with facility.) She read a good deal, and it may be noted to her credit that she cared only for good fiction. Nor did she omit to make herself acquainted with the history of her art; for she had begun to realize that she was destined to fill an exalted position in its highest lyric sphere.

She remained withal the same high-spirited, happy Adelina —bright and lively in temperament, unassuming and unaffected in manner, brimful of sparkling humor—that she had been ever since she cried for her dolls and stood upon

a table on the platform of Tripler's Hall. She was happy, and had nothing to do but enjoy life.

Another point: she was almost always relieved of one of the most irksome and fatiguing duties incidental to the work of a prima donna—that of rehearsing familiar operas. She owed this to the adroitness and foresight of Maurice Strakosch, who perceived what an immense advantage there would be in warding off a large amount of physical exertion, provided the same artistic result were attained. He arrived at it by a simple expedient. He took her place at rehearsal himself. And why not? As her "coach," no one knew better than he exactly what she was going to do; and he was perfectly capable of going through the entire opera in the precise manner that Adelina would sing and enact it at night. So it came about that he was everywhere accepted as her substitute at all but formal dress rehearsals.

This arrangement enabled her to appear, if necessary, on three evenings a week without experiencing undue fatigue. She did so, for instance, when singing at Vienna in 1863. But, in order to preserve her strength, she then accepted no invitations to go into society; at which society grumbled loudly, and of course held Maurice Strakosch responsible. The Viennese public knew that he acted as her substitute at rehearsals, that he transacted all her business, that he was, so to speak, the buffer that prevented her being brought into contact with the *oi polloi* of the Austrian capital; and it did not take long for the fact to become regarded as an amusing joke.

Indeed, Mr. Sutherland Edwards tells us[1] that "a piece was brought out at one of the Viennese minor theatres called "Adelina and Her Brother-in-Law," in which Strakosch was represented as impersonating her on all possible and impos-

[1] "The Prima Donna," by H. Sutherland Edwards, Vol. II, p. 87.

sible occasions. A visitor called to see Adelina, and was told that she was not at home, but that Mr. Strakosch would receive him. A photographer wished to take Adelina's portrait: 'She cannot sit,' replies Strakosch, 'but I shall be happy to replace her.' At last an infatuated admirer presented himself, bent on making Adelina a declaration of love! 'She is too much engaged to listen to you,' replied the Strakosch of the farce; 'but anything you may have to say can be addressed to me.' ''

Such devices as those planned by Strakosch for sparing Adelina avoidable labor were probably unique. They would naturally be out of the question under the conditions imposed by modern opera. As it was, they did not please Costa, who was a martinet in the enforcement of musical discipline, though he had to give way where the diva was concerned. Happily, no other prima donna thought of asking for the same privilege. Thus it never came to be regarded as a precedent; and, indeed, a substitute at rehearsal is in most cases a wholly unreliable guide to the intentions of the principal, and is consequently a hindrance rather than a help to the smooth working of the ensemble.

Nothing was allowed to interfere with the clockwork regularity of Mlle. Patti's domestic existence generally and of her precious morning occupations in particular. It was in the forenoon that she really worked; and, no matter what rôles she might have to prepare, she always began practice with her scales, trills, cadenzas, or other technical exercises. Neither then nor later in life would she allow a day to pass without practice, if she could help it. As at Clapham in the sixties, as at Craig-y-Nos Castle in the nineties (and for the latter the writer can personally vouch), she thought it absolutely incumbent upon her to sing her scales every morning.

Only on the days when she was to appear at the opera did she restrict her vocal study to twenty minutes or half-an-hour. Then visitors were not received, and in the afternoon she would rest. After a light meal at about five o'clock, she drove to Covent Garden, and ate no more until she returned home after the performance. On other days she went out walking or driving, as the weather permitted, and received her friends at tea-time. When they came to dinner there was sometimes music afterward, but as a rule she was in bed by a tolerably early hour. The Pattis went out very little. They had only a few intimate friends. Plenty of people sought to make their acquaintance, but the male guardians of the establishment were extremely particular, especially as to the young men whom they granted the privilege of calling.

It will be readily imagined that the maiden was not left a great deal to herself. On the contrary, she was watched over with unceasing vigilance. She had for some time had a tireless chaperon, Fräulein Louise Lauw, a Hamburg lady of good education and fairly amiable disposition, who, however, was only two years older than herself. Fräulein Lauw appears to have completely won her affection and confidence; for, while doing her duty as a watchful companion, she was clever enough not to hold the reins too tight, but acted in all matters as a sympathetic friend of the budding Adelina.[1]

[1] It was also at Pierrepoint House (in 1865) that Karolyn Baumeister entered her service. "Karo," as her mistress affectionately called her, was her faithful companion and friend for five-and-thirty years, during the latter half of which period she was a very important member of the household at Craig-y-Nos Castle. Whenever and wherever Mme. Patti travelled, on all her American, Continental, and provincial tours, her frequent visits abroad, Karo was always with her. No one knew her ways or could look after her so well; no one else might arrange her costumes or her jewels or get them ready for the theatre, though Patro, her devoted negro servant, was the trusted maid who helped her to put them on. Karo was profoundly attached to her, and regarded

If we were to deduct a liberal discount for exaggeration, there is no reason why Fräulein Lauw should not be accepted as a tolerably credible witness concerning this period. Her evidence is, however, of too trivial a kind to be worthy of quotation. It is contained in a book entitled "Fourteen Years with Madame Patti," published in Vienna in 1863, which she wrote when living in the family of Jules Fischof, the Austrian banker, whose wife was a sister of our friend Maurice Strakosch. One English reviewer described it at the time as "full of small talk and gossip, and commendably free from scandal." Why not? There was no spark of scandal to kindle a fire with. The gossip may advantageously be ignored.

A single episode alone do we cull from the pages of this volume. It tells the story of Adelina's first sweetheart—a young Milanese of picturesque aspect and engaging manners. She met him one night at dinner at the house of a venerable Italian friend, to whom she was so attached that she always called him "dear papa." It is Fräulein Lauw who speaks:

I had to promise her to seize the first opportunity to get acquainted with this "interesting young man," since she wanted to learn what impression this vision from a more ideal world would make on me. The opportunity came soon in a dancing party given by our "papa." We had hardly reached the house before the young man was at Adelina's side, and I was introduced to him by her. Before I had found time to form an opinion of him Adelina stormed me with questions how he pleased me. To her great satisfaction I could agree with her that he was a handsome man, of a very engaging disposition. But Papa Patti, too, seemed to have taken a particular fancy to the young Milanese,—by occupation a merchant,—for he invited him to his house, a favour which but few could boast,

herself as the shield that protected the diva from the outside world. She also prided herself—and not perhaps without good reason—upon being able to distinguish the real friends from the flatterers. She was pensioned off some years ago, and still lives in the neighborhood of Kensington.

NORINA, 1863

LUCIA, 1863

and of which the young man made the most generous use. A frosty Northerner would not have hesitated long over a wooing; it is therefore easily comprehensible that the fiery young Italian did not debate the matter long, but asked for the hand of Adelina.

Papa Patti gave his consent, but on condition that the marriage should not take place till several years had passed. The condition was not agreeable to the young couple, especially not to the young bridegroom. He would have preferred to marry Adelina at once. He therefore wanted Adelina to renounce the stage and live only for him. Papa Patti entered a most negative protest. The betrothed lovers, therefore, had to accept the unbending decision of the father, and put up for the time being with the privilege of meeting each other twice a week in the house of the "papa" and there cooing to their hearts' delight.

Adelina continued her career of triumph; but, while the public performed almost impossible things in its enthusiasm, Adelina's betrothed sat in his chair as if on coals. His eyes flashed flames and daggers in all directions, and whenever he saw the face of a notorious Patti admirer in a box, flushed with enthusiasm, he would have gladly murdered its owner offhand if the *bon-ton* had but given him half permission. But it was not the public alone whose enthusiasm enraged the young Othello. The lava of his jealousy poured also over the artists who supported her. When old Ronconi, who, as a compliment, had assumed the rôle of *Masetto* in "Don Giovanni," and who wanted to hear nothing of love either on the stage or in real life, placed his arm around *Zerlina's* waist, the would-be bridegroom was driven almost into a frenzy. But when the great Mario, as *Romeo,* kissed his *Juliet,* it seemed as if the jealous one hunted in his pockets for a bomb with which to destroy his supposed rival.

More and more consumed by jealousy, the young man declared to Adelina's father that he would wait no longer, and must instantly marry his love. The two men quarrelled, and the result was that Signor M. seized his hat in a rage and rushed from the house never to return. Adelina was beside herself and wept bitterly when she heard of the rapid conclusion of her love idyl. Her feminine pride was deeply pained that the man whom she had made happy

by the bestowal of her love should renounce her. She began to doubt the sincerity of his love, and his name nevermore passed her lips.

This little romance rather suffers in the telling from the heaviness of the Hamburg touch. No doubt Fräulein Lauw felt the need for plenty of color in the relation of her "small talk." It did not require a great deal, however, to prove that Adelina's jealous first sweetheart was a very stupid young man, and that she was well rid of him at the cost of a few tears. The point of the story that most interests us is its indication that Mlle. Patti at this particular age was not altogether the calm, frigid person, devoid of heart and innocent of passion, that she has sometimes been depicted.

"She has never really been in love," was often said of Patti when it was thought that there was not enough tragic intensity in her acting. That may have been true—in some measure—down to the time when she discovered the real nature of her feelings for Ernest Nicolini, her second husband. Yet, even without Fräulein Lauw's trivial gossip, there is reason to believe that, during the five or six years that preceded her marriage with the Marquis de Caux, she more than once fell in and out of love.

Naturally, her opportunities for indulging in flirtations were not to be compared with those of most girls of her age; but she was far too sensible, too cognizant of the serious claims of her art, in a word, as the French say, too *sage*, to give real encouragement to any of the admirers who pestered her with their attentions. Hence, perhaps, one amusing incident at this period that came as a great surprise, and that was in the nature of a *revanche* for feelings wounded by indifference and repulse.

One fine May morning in 1863 the tranquillity of this happy

home was suddenly disturbed by the delivery of a document bearing the stamp of the Court of Chancery and addressed to Mlle. Adelina Patti. At first glance it looked innocent enough. Was it a writ, or subpœna, or some other harmless if perturbing instrument? Evidently, on closer inspection, it was found to embody an extraordinary puzzle. For the suit wherein she was called upon to testify was described in large letters as "Patti v. Patti," the plaintiff being the diva herself; while the defendant was no other than her own father, with whom was associated Maurice Strakosch. Similar papers were served upon those gentlemen at the same time and place, requiring them immediately to file an answer to certain charges that had been brought against them by—the plaintiff.

By the *plaintiff?* How could that be? She knew no more about the affair than did her unoffending relations. What could it all mean? Again the family scanned the blue document; and in so doing they discovered something else, which only helped to enhance the mystery. They saw it stated that the plaintiff in the case was acting through an individual whom the law described as "her next friend." His name? They had never heard it before. It was James Ivor Macdonald. Whoever he might be, he was evidently the person who was "moving" the court. The first thing to do, therefore, must be to go to a lawyer and find out something about Mr. Macdonald.

Maurice Strakosch was far more upset than his plucky little sister-in-law.[1] Being accustomed to shield her from all annoyance, and even, as we have seen, to act as her substitute at the theatre, he endeavored to "accept service" of the subpœna as well as the writ. But this was not permitted. Nor did it much matter, seeing that there was obviously no

[1] It is, nevertheless, a fact that he makes no mention whatever of the whole affair in his "Souvenirs d'un Impresario."

possibility of concealing the affair from the "plaintiff" herself. Besides,—and this worst of all,—the whole story was published in that morning's papers. The wretched farce, or tragedy, or whatever it might be, had been made public, and was by now doubtless being eagerly discussed all over London. Consequently, Maurice Strakosch made a bee-line for his lawyer's office, and there learned that the matter was not altogether a practical joke.

It is time, perhaps, to disclose the nature of the charge upon which the "plaintiff" in this precious suit sought to obtain the protection of the Court of Chancery. It alleged, briefly, that the "said defendants had treated the plaintiff with cruelty, interfered with her liberty, appropriated her jewelry, and kept her short of money." Moreover, as the court had required corroboration, such evidence had been supplied in three minutely worded and highly colored affidavits confirming everything set forth by the pseudo-plaintiff and her "next friend."

But who was this next friend, this James Ivor Macdonald, who had taken it upon himself to invoke the aid of the law on the little lady's behalf? Positively no one at Clapham had ever heard of the person. The question was repeatedly asked, not only in the Patti household, but in the various social circles whence the merits of this surprising and wholly unexpected *cause célèbre* were being canvassed. The solution that occurred to most people was that "Mr. James Ivor Macdonald" had sought to create trouble, and to associate himself, for the sake of advertisement, with an action which, if known as "Patti v. Patti," would at least create a nine-days' wonder and provide the newspapers with unlimited material for sensational copy.

These things it assuredly did. The papers were full of it; and, to give the case still greater prominence, matters were so arranged that the hearing should be fixed for a date early

in June, just when the diva would be in the midst of her triumphal appearances at Covent Garden. Altogether it was a curious business, very cleverly and cunningly planned.

However, the clue to the mystery was soon discovered by the legal adviser and the chief parties concerned. He quickly unveiled the identity—not, indeed, of Mr. James Ivor Macdonald, but of one of the authors of his supporting affidavits, to wit, a gentleman known as the Baron de V.[1] This young man, it appeared, had some time before fallen violently in love with Mlle. Patti and sought the honor of her hand. His suit was rejected. Moreover, it was found necessary, for various reasons, to forbid him the house or to approach the young lady further in his endeavor to win her affections.

Like *Malvolio*, the Baron de V. had sworn to be revenged; and the method he adopted for that purpose was a singularly mean one. Having no personal quarrel with Adelina, he bethought him how he could best annoy her guardians, who had, so to speak, "warned him off." He therefore hit upon the plan that, as we have seen, constituted them defendants in a Chancery action, with Mlle. Patti herself fictitiously put forward as plaintiff by a dummy "next friend" in the person of an obscure Scotchman—probably some obliging and unscrupulous lawyer's clerk.

Thanks to the blindness (or stupidity) of the Chancery officials, the trick succeeded perfectly. The affidavits were assumed to be truthful, and the case had perforce to come to a hearing. The press was naturally anxious to accord it all possible publicity, thereby playing still more effectively into the hands of the conspirators.

The Court of Chancery, however, decided that, as the plaintiff was under age, the case should be heard *in camerâ*, which meant that reports of the proceedings could not be published. Not in Great Britain, perhaps—but why not abroad? So

[1] It is not worth while, after so many years, to give the name in full.

thought the "wicked Baron," and he accordingly took pains to have a garbled account of the affair circulated among the French journals. Portions of this were eventually quoted—regardless of the risk of "contempt of court"—in certain English papers.

On the whole, the press took sides with the idol of the public and refused to believe in the genuineness of the proceedings. Still, one or two could not resist treating the affair in a jocular spirit. On June 1, just before the case came on for hearing, a paper called the *Morning Star* (long since defunct) printed a lengthy editorial, in course of which it remarked:

> The public will sympathise with the young divinity of song in thus making her first appearance in the Court of Chancery, a suitor in her own despite, losing a *suitor* under much the same circumstances; and proving that the only compulsion she has been suffering under has been that of demanding the protection of the court when she did not need it. It is one of the penalties of greatness to have over-zealous friends, and we catch something of the power of the magic that the young enchantress exercises over her hearers when an utter stranger is thus found undertaking all the costs of a Chancery suit to bring his name in apposition with hers before a curious public.

Thirst for notoriety was apparently the worst motive that this editor could assign as the Baron's reason for dragging the private affairs of a popular singer before a court of law. The learned Vice-Chancellor was even more credulous. He took it all seriously, and apparently looked forward with gusto to inquiring into the charges of cruelty, etc.—*in camerâ!*

But two days later the *Morning Star* wound up a second article with this sentence:

> The nine days' wonder has collapsed, and henceforward we hope the tatlers will leave Mlle. Patti in the undisturbed enjoyment of that domestic happiness which, everybody will be pleased to learn,

sweetens her life and solaces the cares and toils of her professional career.

What had happened was this. The Court of Chancery, having been fooled to the top of its bent, was quietly allowed to go on and open its sitting *in camerâ* for the hearing of the suit. Mlle. Patti's counsel then rose and put in, on her behalf, an affidavit which ran as follows:

PATTI *v.* PATTI.

In re Adelina Patti, of 22 High Street, Clapham, an infant under the age of twenty-one years, by James Ivor Macdonald, her next friend,

and

Salvatore Patti and Maurice Strakosch.

I have heard read carefully the Bill of Complaint and the affidavit of H. de L., Baron de V., and others, filed in support of it, and I say that, although my name is used as the plaintiff in this suit, it has been done entirely without my sanction and even without my knowledge. . . . There is not one word of truth in any of the allegations against my said brother-in-law or against my said father in any of the affidavits filed in this cause. I wholly deny that I am or ever was treated with cruelty by them, or that my liberty is or ever was controlled,—or that I am or ever was kept short of money, or that my jewellery or any part of it has been appropriated by them. . . . It is, however, true that the defendant, my father, takes care of the bulk of my earnings as an operatic singer for me, and I say I have the most entire confidence in and the greatest love for my dear father, and also for the defendant the said Maurice Strakosch, both of whom have always treated me with the most affectionate kindness.

(*Signed*) Adelina Patti.

History does not relate whether the Court looked more

foolish or more learned than ever after the foregoing statement had been read. Anyhow, the Vice-Chancellor, convinced at last that there was not a vestige of truth in the whole story, immediately ordered the suit to be "removed from the file," and there accordingly it ended.

But what of the plotters? In these days a watchful Director of Public Prosecutions would have taken care to have the whole lot tried and sent to prison for conspiracy and perjury. As it was, nothing was done, and they were allowed to get off scot-free. The Baron's revenge cost him something out of pocket; but he managed in some degree to accomplish his mean, ungentlemanly object.

The hard work of the preceding winter and spring had been fraught with valuable experience. This, coupled with much careful study, must be held accountable for the marked advance that was discovered in the art of Adelina Patti on her reappearance at Covent Garden in May, 1863. The critics had full opportunity for comparisons, since she once more made her *rentrée* as *Amina.* They were delighted to find in the familiar impersonation fresh resources and new points of excellence.

They thought the wonderful golden voice had continued to acquire volume and richness. They looked in vain for certain faults of style which the more hypercritical among them had previously indicated—with the same satisfaction, no doubt, that the astronomer announces the spots on the sun. Yes, they "thought her style had improved," and Chorley was notably keen in his appreciation of the advance that had taken place since the season before. He even began to admire her *Zerlina,* though he always insisted that her dress was more French than Spanish.[1]

[1] On her first appearance in "Don Giovanni" he had said, "Wherefore *Zerlina* chose to appear in a Parisian ball-dress is among the riddles of

On the great question of good taste and appropriateness in her vocal embellishments, expert opinion had by now undergone an entire change, at any rate in Great Britain. Rossini had not quite made up his mind on the subject; he would admire one day and be sarcastic the next.

While Patti was in Paris, Berlioz remarked in his *feuilleton*: "Rossini seems delighted to hear of changes, embroideries, and the thousand abominations which singers introduce into his airs." On the other hand, Rossini said: "My music is not yet made; people work at it, but it will only be on the day when nothing is left of me that it will have reached its real value."

Then, strangely enough, Chorley took up the cudgels on behalf of tradition and the "little lady," and replied as follows: "The bitterness of this sarcasm is only equalled by the sheer nonsense of it. Signor Rossini has notoriously said to hundreds of singers that, in his songs of parade, he merely sketched certain embroideries for which others might be substituted. . . . The solid features of his operas are indestructible, and, as such, not to be reconstructed at the call of any singer's caprice. As for their garlands and decorations, ill humor is wasted in the employment of diatribes against them. The great and the real remain."

The same writer led the chorus of praise that greeted Mlle. Patti's first appearance (at Covent Garden) on May 28 in the character of *Leonora* in "Il Trovatore."[1] He wrote: "Patti the other evening surprised her greatest admirers by dramatic power hitherto unsuspected, put forth by her in 'Il Trovatore.'"

Said the *Musical World*: "Mlle. Patti played *Leonora* in

costume" (*Athenæum*). To judge by photographs taken at the time, the riddle was purely of his own manufacture. But it was not unworthy of the pen that makes *Siebel* say in "Faust," "While to her in the air I bended my knee."

[1] See Appendix P.

the 'Trovatore' for the first time, but not for the last time, we feel assured. We have heard a great deal too much of the 'Trovatore'; but Mlle. Patti imparts a new charm to *Leonora,* and sings the music with wonderful brilliancy. She is, in short, the most intellectual and poetical *Leonora* we have ever seen on any stage. Her acting with Signor Mario in the last two scenes was worthy of Rachel."

Nevertheless, the part was deemed rather heavy for her, and only two repetitions were vouchsafed. Mr. Gye also wisely determined to give "La Sonnambula" a rest. It was not performed again after the opening night, and "Don Giovanni" and "Il Barbiere" mainly shared the Patti nights with Verdi's hackneyed work until some lighter operas could be got ready. The first of these, Rossini's "La Gazza Ladra" (given on June 6), won a huge success. The new *Ninetta* was freely compared with Grisi in her best days. Chorley wrote: "Her *Ninetta* is, we think, by much the best of her serious characters. Her phrasing of it is larger than formerly; her power of voice is sufficient; the pathos of the part is tenderly felt by her; her ornamental passages retain little or nothing of the staccato manner which we feared might grow into a mannerism. We were pleased with it throughout."

In three other characters new to her London répertoire did Mlle. Patti appear during the last month of this busy season, viz: *Norina* in "Don Pasquale (July 9), *Adina* in "L'Elisir d'Amore" (July 21), and *Marie* in "La Figlia del Reggimento" (July 28). It would be difficult to say in which of these Donizetti operas she charmed her public most. The critics bestowed superlatives upon each. They especially welcomed her restoration of the original finale to "Don Pasquale" ("La moral' di tutto questo"), which she sang in the most piquant and captivating manner, the ornaments being no less in good taste than brilliant and effective."[1]

[1] *Musical World.*

The writer on the *Morning Star* expressed his admiration in this flowery fashion: "In the cajolery of her coquetry, the effusion of her genuine tenderness, and the snappiness of her termagancy, she is equally irresistible in her fascination, and such a *Norina* was probably never dreamed of by Donizetti even in his most sanguine visions. The finale was sung with all her familiar birdlike brilliance and incomparable combination of sparkling radiance and perfect grace."

Of "L'Elisir d'Amore" Davison declared in the *Times:* "No performance during the whole season has been more keenly relished. . . . Patti's is the best *Adina* we can remember." The critic of the *Musical World* confirmed this by saying: "It is, in fact, the best we have seen by a great deal on the English boards."

Finally came another triumphant success in "La Figlia del Reggimento." Despite memories, then green, of the exquisite Henrietta Sontag, who had been heard as *Marie* only a dozen years before, the general opinion was that Patti's impersonation was even more entrancing —certainly that nothing approaching it in all-round fascination had been witnessed at Covent Garden. Of the notices the following (from the *Morning Star* again) is quite a fair sample:

> This incomparable artist sang *Marie* for the first time in England, and for the first time exhibited to the English public the veritable personality of the piquant, graceful, and warm-hearted *vivandière.* The simple truth is that Mlle. Patti is not merely a singer who can act,—she is heart and soul an actress. Her perception of character is marvellously keen and truthful; she seems to grasp instinctively the entire individuality, taking equal heed of its natural temperament and of the influence which has been exerted upon it by extraneous agencies, and her ideal is wrought out with matchless delineative power. . . . Her singing was throughout unsurpassable, sparkling with vocal brilliancy and dramatic expression. Altogether it was an incomparably perfect representation of Donizetti's heroine.

Thus wore on to its close the season of 1863. It had been brilliant from the outset and rendered additionally so by the State performance given on April 28 in honor of the marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales. As we have seen, Mlle. Patti appeared in four new parts. She was promised in a fifth, namely, *Zerlina* in "Fra Diavolo," but did not then (or subsequently) essay it at this house. On July 18 the accomplished Pauline Lucca had made her début in England as *Valentina* in "Les Huguenots," and she—unquestionably the ideal *Zerlina* of Auber's opera—practically monopolized the rôle to the end of her Covent Garden career.

Here is Mlle. Patti's record for the season of 1863:

"Il Barbiere di Siviglia"	7
"Don Giovanni"	6
"Il Trovatore"	3
"La Gazza Ladra"	3
"Martha"	3
"Don Pasquale"	3
"L'Elisir d'Amore"	2
"La Figlia del Reggimento"	2
"La Sonnambula"	1
Total	30 representations.

This was the year, too, in which Gounod's "Faust" was first produced in London, Mr. Mapleson leading the way at Her Majesty's with such extraordinary success that Mr. Gye followed suit with all possible speed at Covent Garden. At both houses it attracted enormous audiences till the end of the season. The cast at the Royal Italian Opera included the original *Marguerite,* Mme. Miolan-Carvalho, with Tamberlik as *Faust*, Faure as *Mephistopheles,* and Graziani as *Valentin.* Not until the following year, however, was Patti to set all the town talking of her admirable *Gretchen.*

CHAPTER XI

The Two Sisters—Carlotta Patti's Strange Career—Cause and Effects of Her Lameness—A Brilliant Concert Vocalist—Début in London (1863)—Mr. Gye's Unsuccessful Experiment—Futile Comparisons—The Diva's Increasing Fees and Continental Triumphs—Essays *Marguerite* in Germany and Paris; then (1864) at Covent Garden—The Garden Scene in "Faust"—Exit Pauline Lucca; enter Adelina Patti—The Two *Gretchens* and the Critics—Revival of "Linda"—State Concerts—Patti's Conductors

YET another interesting family incident belongs to the busy season of 1863; namely, the first visit to England of Carlotta Patti, the second of Adelina's two elder sisters. They had not met since the "baby" left New York in the autumn of 1860 and achieved her phenomenal rise to the highest pinnacle of European fame. During that interval Carlotta Patti had surprised her American friends by herself starting upon the career of a vocalist. So far, it had proved, as we shall see, successful enough to warrant her not fearing to measure swords—upon the concert platform, at least—with her gifted younger sister. Their artistic lines ran parallel, however, for a relatively brief space of time; and, to be absolutely just, it would have been far better for Carlotta, clever singer though she was, had they not been brought into close juxtaposition.[1]

How the reunion came about we shall relate. But first let us deal with the unpleasant matter of Carlotta's lameness, which had been perceptible enough to prevent her from turning her talent to the operatic stage. There was apparently some mystery as to the cause of this affliction. At any rate,

[1] See Appendix Q.

if the family knew all about it, the world did not; and common gossip, ever ready to scent a scandal in a mystery, went so far as to hint with much positiveness that the person primarily responsible for Carlotta's slight *"claudification,"* as Maurice Strakosch termed it, was no other than her little sister Adelina.

A more untruthful or preposterous suggestion never came under the category that *Don Basilio* describes so graphically in his famous song "La Calunnia." Equally unfounded was the more general belief that the lameness of Carlotta Patti had been occasioned by a fall. It actually came about during childhood through a gradual "shortening" of the leg, for which unkind fate alone could be held responsible.[1]

No doubt Adelina's phenomenal success had a great deal to do with her sister's abandonment of the pianoforte (which, it will be remembered, she had studied under the virtuoso and piano-maker, Henri Herz) in favor of a vocal career. When, as a girl, she was teaching Adelina to play, Carlotta's voice had attracted no particular attention. It seems to have developed at a later period than usual. Certainly it was not until the youngest girl was well launched that the Patti-Barili family began to perceive the possibility of her repeating —or at least profitably imitating—Adelina's achievements.

Carlotta had not long returned home from South America, where she had been nursing her step-sister Clotilda through

[1] Apart from the evidence of Maurice Strakosch ("Souvenirs d'un Impresario," p. 121), there was that of Dr. Ceccarini, a well-known New York surgeon, who invented an apparatus which so far helped the artist to disguise her limp that she ventured to appear in opera in that city. According to the *New York Musical Review* (September, 1862), "Miss Carlotta Patti was expected to move with the same apparent ease and precision as if she had never been lame." But this hope was not fulfilled. She was only too conscious that she still limped; and, although she appeared in three or four operas (incidentally aiding thereby to extricate a needy impresario from his financial troubles), the experiment did not result in a success, nor was it ever repeated.

a long and fatal illness. With her came that sister's husband, Signor Scola, a vocal teacher and a musician of some ability.[1] He it was who now undertook Carlotta's vocal training; and, aided by her musical knowledge, she made such rapid progress that by the end of a year she was thought ready to appear in public. She made her début, accordingly, at a concert given in New York in January, 1861, just fourteen months after Adelina's memorable advent in opera in the same city.

Her reception was favorable, and such was the magic now attaching to the name of Patti that Carlotta's reputation quickly spread all over the United States.[2] But she was still far from the finished vocalist that her younger sister had been long before her age. She was not yet even the artist that London heard and enjoyed two years later. Like her elder sister Amalia—for that matter, like Jenny Lind too, in her time—she found it hard to master the shake. Five months after her début she was still, apparently, struggling with this difficulty. She then gave a concert, assisted by Amalia (Mme. Maurice Strakosch), the tenor Brignoli, and her step-brother, Ettore Barili, which elicited some highly characteristic remarks in the local musical paper.[3]

With increasing fame and experience, however, Carlotta grew likewise in artistic stature. London began to hear of

[1] Signor Scola's name used to be included occasionally among the list of claimants to the honor of having "taught" Adelina Patti. As a matter of fact, he never gave her a lesson in his life.

[2] See Appendix R, Letter from Louis Moreau Gottschalk.

[3] The *New York Musical Review*, June, 1861. The notice began thus: "The concert given by Miss Carlotta Patti was also very successful, as the papers say. There was also a good deal of singing by Mme. Strakosch and Messrs. Brignoli and Barili, done in the usual style, which is not always to our taste. Miss Patti sang well—better than we have heard a good many renowned singers do it [*sic*]—but what she cannot do as yet is—*trilling*. The trill in the 'Bolero' of the 'Sicilian Vespers' presented some curious and vacillating outlines, which might be called shaky, but which were by no means those of a regular artistic trill."

her brilliant successes in the concert-room, though probably nothing about her ineffectual invasion of the operatic domain. Ultimately, thanks to the diplomatic intervention of Maurice Strakosch (backed up by sister Adelina), these same reports reached the remote and exalted atmosphere of Mr. Frederick Gye's *sanctum sanctorum* at Covent Garden. Then an idea occurred to the former manager of Alfred Mellon's Promenade Concerts. If only on the strength of the name of Patti, might it not be an excellent business proposition to bring over Carlotta?

The scheme was duly arranged, and, early in 1863, Mr. Gye entered into an engagement with Carlotta Patti for one year from the month of April. His plan was something of a novelty. It was to put the new-comer into the Royal Italian Opera bill twice a week, as the star of a kind of concert that was to follow the shorter operas of the répertoire, chiefly, if not exclusively, on the nights when Adelina was not singing.

From an artistic point of view, the idea had absolutely nothing to recommend it. The chances were that, if the singer made a hit, the additional attraction might augment the receipts. It was a purely commonplace, commercial speculation, and was regarded as such by the critics, who did not like the innovation well enough to remain for more than the first "concert" or two. Davison barely mentioned the new feature; while in his final review of the season he wrote in the *Times:* "Carlotta's appearances do not properly enter into a record of the operatic season, being wholly distinct from the *bona-fide* operatic representations."

Adelina was still in Vienna when her sister made her début at Covent Garden on April 16 in this "go-as-you-please" entertainment. Her selection comprised the following arias: "Gli angui d'inferno" ("Magic Flute") "O luce" ("Linda di Chamouni"), the inevitable "Echo Song" by Eckert, and

the duet from "L'Elisir d'Amore," sung with Graziani of the "noble" and also "velvety" voice. In her rendering of these pieces Carlotta showed herself not unworthy of her American reputation, nor of the honors that had been profusely heaped upon her by admiring friends at a banquet given in New York the night before she sailed.

She had by now, indeed, become a highly accomplished vocalist. Her voice sounded rather heavier and (in the more acute notes) more penetrating than Adelina's; but it never had the same peerless beauty of tone, the same wonderfully suave texture, the same sympathetic quality, the same capacity for expressing and arousing every shade of emotion. This I was able to observe for myself ten years later, when I heard Carlotta Patti for the first time.

Nevertheless, Carlotta's was a fine organ. It was extremely flexible, and its phenomenal compass extended easily to the G and even G sharp in *alt.* The musical ring of the high F was quite remarkable; it was effectively exhibited in the Mozart aria, whereof one contemporary writer observed: "The *staccato* passages we have never heard surpassed in clearness, crispness, and purity of intonation."

But nothing short of a miracle could have made these ill-arranged performances successful. The public manifested no overwhelming desire to listen to Carlotta Patti. The late concerts at the Opera did not draw. By the end of the season it was wisely resolved that the two sisters should no longer appear under the same roof. Carlotta, however, stayed on at Covent Garden in the autumn to fulfil an engagement at Mellon's Promenade Concerts. There she was in her true element. Her execution of the most difficult and showy *feux-d'artifice* won her great popularity, and, on the termination of her year's contract with Mr. Gye, she began touring on her own account.

Altogether her career as a singer extended over about seven-

teen years. Her talent certainly found admirers in every part of the globe. She was essentially a *virtuose*, not an interpreter of the dramatic, either in musical expression or character.

Herein, perhaps, lay the principal difference between the gifts of the two sisters. Adelina's revealed at all points the unerring instinct and convincing temperament of genius. Carlotta never possessed the magnetic quality of her younger sister—least of all that uncommon attribute which the Italians associate with the art of the *improvisatore*, and which enabled Adelina so to conceal her method that all she did seemed like the spontaneous outpouring, the rushing torrent of her individual feeling.

Yet, strangely enough, there was a time when each sister commanded her own set of partizans, ready to champion the claims of either to public admiration. Such controversies—like those of the Handel-Buononcini or Gluck-Piccini order—are, generally speaking, too charged with prejudice, too trivial, for posterity to need to analyze or speculate over them. There could never have been any real question concerning the respective merits of Carlotta and Adelina Patti.

The former was married in 1879 to the well-known Belgian violoncellist, the Chevalier Ernest de Munck, who resided and taught for some years in London. On her retirement from the concert platform, she settled down in Paris as a vocal teacher, and died there in 1889.

During the autumn of 1863 Adelina Patti, after a brief holiday in Switzerland, fulfilled brilliant engagements in Germany, France, and Spain. The newspapers, having almost exhausted their vocabulary of superlatives, now began to criticize the high fees demanded and paid for her services. Again it was Chorley who, with much common sense, came to the rescue. Thus we read in the *Athenæum*:

Mlle. Adelina Patti is playing and singing her way through Germany along paths strewn with gold. Some of our contemporaries profess themselves to be outraged at the sums this young lady receives. She is engaged to M. Bagier for Paris and Madrid, they tell us, at £120 for each performance.[1] Let us remind them that they have chosen to present her to the public as a first-class singer—the equal of Malibran, Grisi, and Persiani, having an added charm of her own—that of youth. Setting aside the known fact that first-class singers are becoming rarer and rarer every day, Mlle. Patti is not paid more than Malibran—not so much as Mlle. Lind—but a little in excess of La Bastardella, who, in Burney's time, when he was managing the concerts at the Pantheon (*circa* 1780), received 100 guineas nightly for two songs. "False gods are made by fanatics," says the poet; but the fanatics do ill to cry out against the worship of the idols which "themselves have made."

The diva had barely started her German engagement (late in August) when she was summoned to Frankfort to take part in a gala performance given at the Stadt Theater in honor of the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria. She appeared in "Il Barbiere," and it was rumored that her *cachet* on this occasion rose to 10,000 francs (£400)—probably double the sum actually exacted by her impresario, Merelli, of Dutch Cabinet Council fame.

Still, it was an unusually splendid affair. The general public was excluded, the opera house being filled with a crowd of officers in gala uniform and ladies resplendent with jewels. The Emperor led the applause, and encored a waltz song introduced by the ravishing *Rosina* in the Lesson Scene. The performance went off with great success, but there was some fuss on the stage afterwards, when it was discovered that in the chorus there had been an Englishman who had paid one of the choristers a heavy bribe to allow him to take his place.

[1] Bagier's arrangement with Patti was for six weeks in Madrid and six weeks in Paris at the Théâtre-Italien.

It was in course of this tour through Germany that Adelina Patti essayed for the first time the part of *Marguerite* in Gounod's "Faust." The opera, originally produced in Paris in March, 1859, already enjoyed a considerable vogue beyond the Rhine. Mlle. Patti had only been looking ahead when she decided to be ready with a part that she had fallen in love with in Paris the previous winter. She studied it, of course, in Italian, that being then her only operatic language. The supporting company sang in German; but that made no difference whatever to an eager and enthusiastic public, intent solely on listening to the new opera and the new "guest."

The first performance of "Faust" with Patti as *Gretchen* took place at Hamburg in October, 1863, and, according to the correspondent of the *Musical World* (who favored London with a brief account of an event which then interested our metropolis but mildly): "Her success as *Marguerite* was unprecedented." She subsequently repeated it in several other German cities, appearing at the same time with Merelli's company in "Il Barbiere" and with the local opera troupe in "Dinorah."

Then followed Madrid and Paris. In neither city had she the slightest intention of singing her new rôle. Nevertheless in Paris she made a single appearance, in the third act only, on some special occasion in April of 1864. The *Gazette Musicale,* in recording the event, observed that, "Like Miolan-Carvalho, she wore a blonde wig"; but there the resemblance ended, for she acted with "naïve enjoyment and childish coquetry, in place of being always pensive and dreamy."

The comparison is interesting, in view of the fact that the "proper" reading of the character, especially in the then notorious Garden Scene, was very soon to become a burning question. Mr. Gye had not reëngaged Miolan-Carvalho for the season of 1864. He destined *Marguerite* for the gifted but capricious Pauline Lucca, who had made a hit in the

MARGUERITE. 1864

part in Berlin and Vienna. Meanwhile, in May, Patti had made her *rentrée* at the Royal Italian Opera in "La Sonnambula," and had broken down all but the very last prejudice, triumphed over all but the final scintilla of adverse criticism from any quarter whatsoever. Behold Chorley's penultimate genuflexion in the pages of the *Athenæum*:

"Mlle. Patti has reappeared, unquestionably improved since last year. Her voice has ripened, and lost almost entirely that *phenomenon* (otherwise prematurely aged) tone which our ears till now have heard in it and which impaired our pleasure in her ease and agility. Her style has gained some breadth, her acting some expression. She is now probably the best *Amina* on the stage. Yet (of course) she still has to chasten her taste in ornament."

Later came the revival of "Faust" with the new cast—the incomparable Mario in the title-rôle, the piquant Pauline Lucca as *Marguerite* (*Margherita* she was always called in this "Royal Italian" version), and Faure as *Mephistopheles*. The rare combination proved irresistible, yet pleased the public better than it did the critics, who took objection to the coquettish freedom and "coming-on disposition" of the Viennese *Gretchen*. They thought her much too forward in the Garden Scene, far too "knowing" to captivate so refined and gentlemanly a *Faust* as Mario.

Pauline Lucca placed more value on the verdict of the press than on the applause of her audience. So likewise, in this instance, did Mr. Gye, who, while openly sympathizing with his prima donna, was sufficiently alive to the dangers of the situation (might not the Lord Chamberlain intervene?) to look around for a possible substitute in case the wilful Pauline should refuse to mollify the critics by modifying her "business."

She *did* refuse. What was more, she took umbrage at the attitude of every one, both inside and outside the opera house,

and declared that there was a conspiracy to injure her reputation. She declined to remain any longer "in a town where such things were possible"; and accordingly, early in the month of June, pleaded ill health and took her departure for Berlin, leaving her manager in the lurch and, to all appearance, shaking the dust of London from her shoes for ever.

But another *Marguerite* was ready at hand; and who should she prove to be but Mlle. Adelina Patti? Unexpected by the public, unheralded by the press, as the interpreter of that most interesting of new heroines, she stepped into the breach with a facility that astounded all but her intimate friends, and achieved in it what a leading critic was pleased to term the "crowning glory of her brilliant career."[1]

Now was the movement for comparisons! London had heard Tietjens in Gounod's opera at Her Majesty's, Miolan-Carvalho and Pauline Lucca at Covent Garden. What did it have to say after them of Patti? Let us quote first the outspoken Chorley:

> We are as much delighted as surprised by the last of the *Margarets.* The part is read after the fashion of Mme. Miolan-Carvalho, but with a difference. It is less dreamy than hers, without the added amount of spirit and life taking any of those forms which were so questionable in Mlle. Lucca's personation. Whether her mood was to be timid or pensive, to be touched by vanity (as in the Garden Scene), to be tender, impassioned, remorseful or insane, Patti was always refined; there can be no doubt that she satisfied our public more thoroughly than any of her predecessors. The ballad of the "King of Thule" was given with a "dainty, sweet melancholy," yet not *drawled;* the jewel song (encored) with as much young grace as vocal finish; and a charming touch, promising great things for the actress, must be noticed in the perpetual reference of her eyes to the mirror of the magical box. . . . So, too, in the Garden Scene (the best love scene in opera of any time), her avowal

[1] See Appendix S.

left nothing to be desired. So, again, by the side of her dying brother, and after, in the Cathedral, her sorrow and passion were admirable and real, because unforced. Obviously, every note of the music, every word of the text, every change of the situation, had been thought over and been felt by the artist.

In a similar strain a writer in the *Musical Times* thus proclaimed his preference:

The great success during the past month at the Royal Italian Opera has been the *Margherita* of Mlle. Patti in Gounod's ever-welcome opera "Faust." So sudden are the "disappearances" at this establishment that the subscribers can scarcely calculate that the same cast will be repeated on two successive evenings; it is fortunate, therefore, that Mlle. Patti could so perfectly fill the place left vacant by Mlle. Lucca, and indeed present us with even a more perfect representation of Goethe's peasant girl than that of her predecessor in the part. In many positions of the opera Mlle. Patti more thoroughly satisfied us, both vocally and histrionically, than any *Margherita* has yet done.

Davison was tremendously pleased. In course of a long notice in the *Times* he wrote: "Poetical conception and finished execution were never more happily united. Goethe must have had the picture of such a Gretchen in his mind's eye."

And, finally, the whole achievement was summed up in the following manner by the critic of the *Weekly Despatch*:

Her delineation of *Margaret* has thrown its beholders into a delirium surpassing all they have yet experienced. And really they have much excuse, for the performance is so wonderful that it is difficult to describe it without partaking of their excess. . . . It settles pretty effectually the true view of the character. We shall hear no more of the absurd "realism" of Mlle. Pauline Lucca. She as little runs into the extreme of coldness, which was the fault of Mme. Miolan-Carvalho, as into the strange and indefensible levity of Mlle. Lucca. . . . She alone presents the heroine of Goethe and Gounod in her entirety.

The curious part of it all is that, in spite of these candid comparisons, and notwithstanding the fact that Patti, Mario, and Faure continued to attract overflowing houses in "Faust" until mid-August, the whole of the disagreeable features of the episode were immediately forgotten. When Pauline Lucca went off to Berlin she filled the German newspapers with Anglophobic diatribes of the most virulent kind, and declared she would never return to "that city of fog and decayed vegetables"—herein unkindly alluding, of course, to the close propinquity existing between London's leading opera house and Covent Garden Market.

But, in the operatic as in the diplomatic world, it is usually the unexpected that happens. In both spheres quarrels are healed as if by magic. Not only did Mlle. Lucca return to Mr. Gye's establishment in 1865, but she actually made her *rentrée* there in a slightly modified and now wholly acceptable delineation of *Margherita*. Thenceforward for some twenty years she remained a member of the company, grew quite fond of the English people, and professed perfect contentment with her share of the honors in whatever opera she sang.

Meanwhile the winter of 1864–65 saw Patti earning additional laurels in Paris, with "Linda di Chamouni" for her newest and most fascinating opera. The Parisians were particularly partial to Donizetti (had he not, in 1840, written for them two of his masterpieces, "La Favorite" and "La Fille du Régiment"?), and their delight over the young diva's impersonation of *Linda* knew no bounds. So overwhelming was the demand to hear her that the season had to be prolonged into February, despite the fact that all Spain, with "Faust" and Mario, was impatiently awaiting her advent at Madrid. In the final week she sang three times—first in

"Il Barbiere," introducing in the Lesson Scene a Spanish *ariette* by Rossini, called "A Grenade"; secondly in a "benefit" programme of scenes from four operas; and lastly in "Linda," which drew the largest crowd and the biggest receipts of the season.

Yet even then she did not go direct to Madrid, having first to carry out a brief provincial tour in France. She was two nights at Lille, for instance, appearing in the "Barbiere" and "Lucia"; and there, one reads, "The sensation she created was so overwhelming that immense crowds followed her from the theatre to the hotel, where Orphéons and the opera band serenaded her until far into the night." Not until the fourth week in March was she able to start upon her engagement in the Spanish capital, and, late as it was, "Faust" and Mario still had to wait until the little lady had made her stipulated reappearance in "La Sonnambula."

Six weeks after this she was back in England for the Royal Italian Opera season of 1865, uniting the joys of home with the gratification of ever-increasing esteem and admiration on the part of her London critics. Writing of her return (May 13) in "Il Barbiere," with Mario as *Almaviva* and Ronconi as *Figaro,* Davison said in the *Times*:

> Happily, though petted, Mlle. Patti is by no means spoiled. This is apparent in the progress she is continually making. No lyric *comédienne* at present on the boards tries harder to perfect herself —to make herself mistress, in short, of all the requirements indispensable to her recognition as an artist of the first class. Nature has not only bountifully provided her with the physical means, but also with the rare gift of original genius. She can not only master with incredible ease whatever is set down for her, but invents for herself.

Again, when she sang in "Linda di Chamouni" for the first time at Covent Garden (June 6), the same writer de-

clared that her "delineation of the heroine was another finished picture added to a gallery already richly stored with gems,—in short, an exhibition of the highest art."

The cast, in addition to Ronconi, Graziani, and Capponi, included the tenor Brignoli, who, it will be remembered, had been the *Edgardo* of the "Lucia" performance in which the youthful Adelina made her operatic début in New York five and a half years previously. Things had changed indeed since then!

On May 23, 1865, Mlle. Patti made her second appearance at a State Concert at Buckingham Palace, taking part in a selection from Mendelssohn's music to "A Midsummer Night's Dream." She sang the air, "Ye spotted snakes," and in the finale with chorus. From this time forward she appeared by Queen Victoria's command at nearly every State Concert for twenty years in succession. The programmes compiled by Messrs. Anderson and Cusins—each in turn the Queen's "Master of the Musick"—were invariably distinguished by special features, dear to the music-lovers of those times, wherein the diva was naturally the central figure. To give them all would occupy too much space, but it will be convenient to enumerate here a few of the more notable items with which the name of Adelina Patti is associated:

1865 (June 21), State Concert: in trio, "Hearts feel that love thee," from Mendelssohn's "Athalie," with Parepa and Trebelli.

1866 (June 26), State Concert: in quintet from Mozart's "Flauto Magico," with Vilda, Trebelli, Bettini, and Santley; in an air from Benedict's "Undine"; and in *her own ballad,* "On Parting."

1867 (June 18), State Concert: in quintet from Mozart's "Così fan Tutte"; in "Terzetto in Canone" by Costa; and in duet, "Sull' aria," with Pauline Lucca.

1868 (June 19), State Concert: in quartet from Bennett's "Woman

of Samaria," with Drasdil, W. H. Cummings, and Santley; and in duet, "Sull' aria," with Christine Nilsson.

1869 (June 23), State Concert: ensemble including Patti, Nilsson, Tietjens, Monbelli, Trebelli, Gardoni, Bettini, and Santley; and in duet, "Quis est homo," with Trebelli.

1870 (July 6), State Concert: air with two flutes from "L'Etoile du Nord."

1871 (May 15), State Concert: in duet from "La Gazza Ladra," with Trebelli; in quintet from "Così fan Tutte" with others, including the tenor Stockhausen, who also sang "Der Wanderer" with orchestral accompaniment by F. Hiller.

1872 (July 4), at Windsor Castle: in duet, "La ci darem," with Faure; in madrigal from "Roméo," with Victor Capoul; and "Home, sweet home" by the Queen's request. Also (June 5), State Concert: in trio from "Dinorah" with Bettini and Graziani.

1873 (July 10), concert at Buckingham Palace: soprano solo in the Prince Consort's cantata, "L'Invocazione all' Armonia"; other solos by Trebelli, Capoul, and Maurel.

1875 (June 23), State Concert: in trio from "Il Matrimonio Segreto" with Zaré Thalberg and Trebelli; and in madrigal from "Roméo" with Nicolini.

1876 (June 25), State Concert: in above trio with Christine Nilsson and Trebelli.

1879 (June 16), State Concert: in solo pieces only.

1880 (June 29), State Concert: in selection from Gounod's "Mireille" with Nicolini; and "Valse des Bluets" from Cohen's "Estrella."

1882 (June 28), State Concert: in duet from Lenepveu's "Velleda" with Nicolini; ensemble further including Pauline Lucca, Trebelli, Joseph Maas, and Edouard de Reszke.

1886 (June 23), State Concert: in duet from "Semiramide" with Trebelli.

A word here as to conductors. After Sir Michael Costa left Covent Garden in 1871, his place was filled, until the close of the Gye régime, by two admirable orchestral leaders, Vianesi

and Bevignani, who shared between them the duty of directing the operas in which Mme. Patti appeared. Bevignani was an exquisite accompanist, and she preferred him for all the lighter operas, in which his intimate knowledge of her daring vocal flights, *roulades,* variations, *points-d'orgue,* cadenzas (both studied and improvised), *et hoc genus omne* enabled him to maintain perfect unity between the singer and the orchestra. Vianesi was more at home in grand opera, a clever conductor of Meyerbeer, of the later Verdi, and even of early Wagner. He held the baton at Covent Garden, Paris, Brussels, and New York in turn, while Bevignani officiated at St. Petersburg and Moscow. These, then, were the conductors most constantly associated with the great prima donna during the best part of her European stage career. Luigi Arditi was to come later, with the bonanza years in which the American continent was revisited.

PATTI, MARIO, AND FAURE IN "FAUST"

CHAPTER XII

Début at the Handel Festival (1865)—Patti as an Oratorio Singer—Her First "Grand Morning Concert"—Her "Home, sweet home"—A *Susanna* that Never Materialized—First Tour in Italy—How Nicolini Came and Went—Covent Garden Seasons from 1866 to 1870—Mario and Patti in "Romeo"—Ten Years' Work in London—The Marquis de Caux—A Courtship under Imperial Auspices—Marriage at Clapham—Patti and Alboni Sing at Rossini's Funeral—Visit to Russia—The Coalition Season of 1869—Verdi's "Giovanna d'Arco"

IN the summer of 1865 Adelina Patti sang at the Handel Festival for the first time. The great triennial celebration held at the Crystal Palace was then at the height of its glory, and this was perhaps the only imaginable feature that could have enhanced it. It seems to have done so. Among the journals that reported the exciting incidents of the festival at columns' length daily, one solemnly declared that "the presence and coöperation of the diva imparted fresh éclat to this national musical gathering." Another echoed the general opinion when he wrote: "Since the days of Clara Novello no such penetrating and magnificent soprano tones had been heard within the glass edifice of the Crystal Palace."

The conductor of the Handel Festival—a commemorative event inaugurated in 1857 and now being held for the fourth time only—was Sir Michael Costa. It was thanks to his influence (and he was not less powerful here than at the Opera or at Exeter Hall or at Birmingham) that the combined committees of the Sacred Harmonic Society and the Crystal Palace agreed to pay Mlle. Patti her terms for singing at all of the three concerts. They never expected to recoup their outlay. However, as it turned out, Costa's advice proved to

have been thoroughly sound. Attendance and receipts alike beat the record; while, even among the giants of oratorio that flourished in the sixties the versatile cantatrice of twenty-two did something more than merely hold her own.

Let us note the names of a few of those giants. At the festival of 1859 the soloists had all been famous singers—Mme. Clara Novello, Mme. Rudersdorff, Mme. Lemmens-Sherrington, Miss Dolby, Mr. Sims Reeves, Signor Belletti, and Mr. Weiss. In 1862 the same artists appeared again, with the exception of Mme. Rudersdorff, who was replaced by the gifted Theresa Tietjens—then comparatively new to oratorio, although a great operatic favorite—and Mme. Parepa (subsequently the first wife of Carl Rosa), another celebrated oratorio soprano. At the Festival of 1865 Mlle. Patti was associated with the last-named artist; with Mme. Lemmens-Sherrington, Mme. Sainton-Dolby, and Mr. Sims Reeves; and with two other English singers, Mr. Santley and Mr. W. H. Cummings, who now made their débuts at this festival. At subsequent gatherings some of these names were to fall out and others take their place—such, for example, as Trebelli, Patey, Edith Wynne, Albani, Edward Lloyd, Vernon Ribgy, Agnesi, and Foli. But the standard of the soloists at the Handel Festival always remained at the highest until the supply had become exhausted.

Patti's success, as has been stated, was extraordinary. It owed something, of course, to her personal charm, to the glamour that attached to her name and her preëminence as an opera singer. But what really fascinated her twenty-five thousand auditors at the Festival of 1865 was the resonant timbre, the surpassing loveliness of a voice that penetrated to the farthest recesses of the Centre Transept, together with a breadth of style and clearness of diction not unworthy of the best traditions of English oratorio.

The question has often been asked, was Adelina Patti a

typical Handelian vocalist, let us say, in the sense that Clara Novello and Tietjens were? The answer to that must be in the negative. Yet it may be just as emphatically asserted that she was a serious and dignified interpreter of oratorio music. If she did not pursue that branch of her art to the same extent as did most of her gifted contemporaries in Great Britain, it was not through lack of the essential qualities, but rather because her natural bent did not lie in the direction of oratorio. Her artistic nature yearned, above all things, for the stage as an outlet for dramatic expression; in the exposition of character or musical drama she chafed under the narrower limitations of the concert platform.

It was this demand for freedom to "express" in her own way that caused her animated execution of Handelian runs or "divisions" to displease some of the purists. It was not because the notes were not sung crisply or clearly enough, but because her time was not always strictly metronomic; because she could not resist making a slight *rubato* occasionally, or imparting to her *fioriture* something of the dash and *élan* of the operatic cadenza. Then again, hers was not the manner of the motionless declaimer of that time or the statuesque *Lieder*-singer of more modern days. She was wont to enhance the significance of a vocal passage with some slight gesture or physical action dictated by irresistible dramatic impulse; and all such "aids to effect," whether spontaneous or not, were considered out of place in oratorio.

Nevertheless, even the purists of the sixties were fain to utter pæans of joyful welcome when the bright particular star of opera made her first courtesy before the expectant multitude at the Handel Festival. The glorious ringing tone of such a voice as hers, standing out high and clear amid the huge volume of sound created by a choir of three thousand voices and an orchestra of five hundred, was too wonderful in

its dynamic fitness and grandeur to leave a loophole for adverse criticism. Moreover, the general verdict regarding her oratorio style was far from being unfavorable.

At this gathering Adelina Patti sang the solos in the "Messiah" for the first time; and the test under the circumstances was a severe one. Yet James Davison, the greatest stickler in England for traditional oratorio singing, and a harder festival critic than even Henry Chorley, declared in the *Times* that he had "seldom listened to a more perfect execution of 'Rejoice greatly.'" He added: "It would be hypercritical to wish for a more thoroughly devotional reading of 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' than that of Mlle. Adelina Patti, who, without any straining after effect, brought conviction to the mind."

No small achievement, this, for a still youthful prima donna reared amid the demonstrative conventions of the Italian operatic stage. And she followed it up with another triumph on the Selection Day of the Festival, when she sang two of the Saxon master's most familiar airs. The event was thus referred to in the leading musical organ:[1]

> In the selection from "Samson" on Selection Day the great success was reserved for Mlle. Patti, who gave the celebrated "Let the bright Seraphim" so charmingly that the audience was enraptured, and insisted upon an encore. Not only the fresh, beautiful voice of Mlle. Patti, but the silvery tones of Mr. Harper's trumpet, penetrated every part of the vast area. . . . In the selection from "Judas Maccabæus" she gave the air "From mighty Kings" with an artistic finish that thoroughly satisfied every listener.

Finally, on the Friday she took part in the performance of "Israel in Egypt," and made an especial hit in "Thou didst blow with the wind," which she sang, happily, with her own excellent English accent—not the kind of "zou" and "zee"

[1] *Musical Times*, August, 1865.

LEONORA, 1866

LA CATERINA, 1866

prescribed by her distinguished relative, Maurice Strakosch. Her pronunciation, in fact, was so good that Davison made a direct allusion to it in the *Times* when referring to her delivery of the solo verse in the National Anthem at the close of the concert. "She sang it," he said, "with the fervour and emphasis of a loyal and genuine British subject, which she ought surely to be, or she could hardly pronounce English so admirably."

The first typical Patti concert ever given in London took place in London on July 5, 1865, at the then newly erected St. James's Hall in Regent Street, now the site of the Piccadilly Hotel. It was, of course, under the management of Mr. Gye, who paid all the artists (including the concert-giver herself), took all the risks (!), and pocketed the receipts. The programme was of the miscellaneous order hereafter to be associated with a long succession of such "grand morning concerts." It made no pretence at attaining a lofty artistic plane, and, had it done so, it would have offered no attraction to the public. Occasionally in the years to come the services of an orchestra would be called in. Not so yet, however. A pianoforte amply sufficed for the accompaniments.

On the occasion now referred to Mlle. Patti was assisted by operatic stars of the first magnitude,—including Pauline Lucca, Mario, Brignoli, Graziani,—so no wonder the papers described it as "one of the most brilliant affairs of the season." We have no difficulty in believing the statement of one of the musical journals[1] that "The remarkable popularity of Mlle. Patti and the charm about her, apart from those powers which make her singing so specially attractive, were quite enough to secure a large audience."

And what did she sing? Things wherein the perennial Patti was to be heard "many a time and oft" in after years.

[1] *Orchestra*, July 8, 1865.

Among them, for the very first time in London, was the new and in later years much-criticized "Ave Maria," or so-called "Meditation," founded by Gounod upon Bach's first prelude, the violin *obbligato* played by that fine old artist, Prosper Sainton, who had not long before married the contralto, Miss Dolby. Another novelty was the pretty but trivial romance, "Si vous n'avez rien à me dire," by Baroness Willy de Rothschild—afterwards to become so popular that for years it enriched the répertoire of every singing damsel who thought she could warble in French.

Furthermore, at this "grand morning" affair Adelina Patti gave in her own inimitable manner: "Within a mile o' Edinboro town" and "Comin' thro' the rye!" And what of "Home, sweet home"? Yes, even now it was present and inevitable. She sang it as an encore to the French romance, just as she had sung it in her American days of childhood; and as she was to sing it, beyond chance of escape, until the ultimate Albert Hall concert and the parting farewell. Yet without "Home, sweet home," her first London concert would have been no less incomplete than the last. For to hear Patti, at any period of her long career, in "Home, sweet home," was an experience of which the most blasé musical cynic never seemed to tire. That simple achievement brought the public of two continents to her feet.

A thousand pens have attempted to describe her way of singing Bishop's unpretending melody; but it was always indescribable. Words have never conveyed the full sense of its unique charm and exquisite pathos, or solved the riddle of its touching appeal. The miracle was first recorded in her childhood, and she never altered the manner of its performance. Least of all did she herself realize the exact manner in which it was done. It belonged to those classic examples of executive art that are unforgettable because they are spontaneous, inspired, effortless, and at the same time replete with

the purest beauty. There are things that the artist never does twice alike. Patti's "Home, sweet home," was ever exactly the same. And yet, it never palled.

Another item in the scheme of this first "grand morning concert" is worthy of mention here, not merely for the memories that it calls up, but because it brings to mind the story of an unfulfilled promise. The item in question was the duet "Sull'aria" from Mozart's "Figaro," which Adelina Patti now sang for the first time (but not the last by many) with Pauline Lucca. She loved it as "a gem of purest ray serene," and would rarely miss the chance of singing it with some other famous soprano when one was in the same concert "bill." Among those associated with her at various times in "Sull'aria," besides Lucca, were Christine Nilsson, Theresa Tietjens, Marguerite Artôt, Marcella Sembrich, and Emma Albani. Nevertheless, despite her love of Mozart, her acknowledged preëminence as an interpreter of his music, and the incomparable perfection of her *Zerlina,* she never appeared in any of his operas other than "Don Giovanni."

This circumstance is not easy to explain. In more than one Covent Garden prospectus Mr. Gye gave out that she would appear during the season as *Susanna* in "Le Nozze di Figaro." It is therefore reasonable to assume that she had studied the part and had every intention of singing it. Yet this promise was never carried into execution.

Mozart's comic masterpiece was first announced for revival at the Royal Italian Opera with the new *Susanna* in 1865. It was not then, however, mounted at all; and in the following year it was again included in the prospectus with an explanatory note thus quaintly worded:

The large number of rehearsals necessary to the production last season of the great opera of the "Africaine" unfortunately caused

the postponement of this favorite opera—probably next to "Don Giovanni" the most popular work which Mozart has bequeathed to us. "Le Nozze di Figaro" will be given with the following cast:

Susanna . . . . . Mlle. Adelina Patti.
(Her First Appearance in that Character.)
La Contessa . . . . . Mlle. Artôt.
(Her First Appearance in that Character in England.)
Cherubino . . . . . Mlle. Pauline Lucca.
(Her First Appearance in that Character in England.)
Il Conte . . . . . Signor Graziani.
Basilio . . . . . Signor Neri-Baraldi.
Bartolo . . . . . Signor Ronconi.
AND
Figaro . . . . . Monsieur Faure.
(His First Appearance in that Character.)

Alas that such a glorious project should not have been realized! The above combination would have put even the memorable "Don Giovanni" cast into the shade, not to speak of introducing a sprightly and lovable *Susanna* whom the whole world would have adored. But it was not to be. The moment passed.

Opera-goers consoled themselves with Pauline Lucca's delicious and inimitable *Cherubino,* and only after the gifted Viennese soprano had retired from the scene did Mme. Patti bethink her of adding to her répertoire "Voi che sapete." That was not till the nineties. But it took its place quite naturally beside "Batti, batti," and "Vedrai carino," and she sang it with no less charm and distinction of style—the real Patti charm and the true Mozart style!

Towards the end of 1865, after tours in Germany and Holland, came a visit to Italy—the first yet paid by the young prima donna to her parents' native land; that "land of song" which had for some time been clamoring loudly to see

PATTI AND MARIO
In Romeo e Giulietta

ADINA, 1866

and hear her. She was told to prepare for a rapturous Italian welcome, and she got it. They crossed the Alps by the Mont Cénis route, going over the pass and returning by the new tunnel, which had not long been completed. They spent their Christmas in Turin—a right merry party, with "Papa" at the head of the table, and "Maurice" and two or three invited guests to toast the joyous Adelina in "Barolo" and champagne.

There still survives, as this book is written,—in the person of her companion, Karolyn Baumeister, who came to her in September, 1865,—one who remembers the extraordinary scenes of enthusiasm enacted in the theatres of Florence, Bologna, Rome, and Turin when the "fanatical" opera-lovers of those cities first heard Patti in "Sonnambula" and the "Traviata"; how they shouted and applauded and wept like children with sheer delight; how they followed her carriage in thousands from the stage-door to the hotel, where they serenaded her till they were tired. Nothing like it had been witnessed before, even in keen, excitable Italy; and the impression of it was never forgotten.

In 1866 Mr. Gye's prospectus again promised so much which he did not follow up with deeds that it is refreshing to mention one item in particular that actually did materialize, namely, the début of Signor Nicolini, the handsome and accomplished French tenor who, twenty years later, was to become the husband of the heroine of this chronicle.

He made his first bow before a London audience (on May 21, 1866) at a concert given at St. James's Hall by Pauline Lucca; and, oddly enough, when he made his first appearance at Covent Garden eight days later, the *Lucia* to whom he sang *Edgardo* was no less a person than Adelina Patti. In neither instance, however, did the new tenor create a favorable impression.

The following is a fair sample of the notices that appeared:

On Tuesday, May 29, "Lucia di Lammermoor" was performed with Mlle. Patti for the first time this year as the heroine, the part of *Edgardo* being sustained by a new candidate for fame from Paris, of whom report had spoken favorably—Signor Nicolini. This gentleman cannot, however, be said to have made much more than a *succès d'estime*. His voice—being by no means of the highest quality—evidently disappointed the majority of his hearers. One of the chief faults of Signor Nicolini's method is to be discovered in his yielding much too incessantly to a habit of tremulousness, which so many modern singers take to be the only one means for the demonstration of passion. His tone is, however, true, and his execution facile, besides which he has other considerable attractions, his stage figure being good, and his manner, although energetic, refined. . . . That Signor Nicolini, like Brignoli, Fancelli, Lucchesi, and Neri-Baraldi, will become more than a useful addition to the tenors of the Royal Italian Opera is scarcely probable.[1]

In short, the verdict of the critics was so discouraging that Mr. Gye did not hesitate to cancel the new tenor's contract. Signor Nicolini went back to France, and appeared in London no more until the spring of 1871. He then came over with the crowd of refugees who managed to escape the horrors of the siege of Paris, and Mr. Mapleson, who was giving Italian opera at Drury Lane, allowed him another chance of winning a name for himself here. This time he succeeded. He had not got rid of his tremolo. He was never to do so. But the general opinion was that his singing had improved and that he had become a splendid actor.

It was during this season that I heard Nicolini for the first time. He was my first *Faust*, and a better-looking one it has never been my lot to behold. His likeness to Mario in the character was remarkable. The *Marguerite* was a very captivating French soprano named Léon-Duval. By the way, Nicolini's début at Drury Lane, which Mapleson erroneously

[1] From the current number of *Orchestra*.

calls his first appearance in England,[1] was made in Meyerbeer's "Robert le Diable." His success led to his reëngagement by Mr. Gye, and he duly reappeared at Covent Garden in the following year—1872. Thenceforward he became a permanent member of the company.

The story of his subsequent career will fall later into its allotted place in this book. Meanwhile it is interesting to note that, but for the Paris siege, Nicolini would never have returned to this country—in which case his romantic union with Adelina Patti would assuredly never have become a *fait accompli.*

During her visit to Paris in the autumn of 1866 Mlle. Patti stayed, with her father and Maurice Strakosch, at Maria's flat in a house near the Champs-Elysées. The Marchese di Candia (as he was in private life) was away at the time; indeed, he rarely if ever sang in Paris. But the fact of Patti's presence is worth recording, if only for an incident which illustrates the kind of mad worship that was clandestinely paid her at this period by her demented (and disappointed) French adorers. One morning Karolyn Baumeister opened the door of the Mario apartment, and, to her astonishment, found a man outside—a gentleman apparently—on his knees, kissing the mat. She asked him why on earth he was conducting himself so strangely. He got up and asked in his turn, "Does not *she* tread on that mat every time she goes in and out?" Then, without another word, he put on his hat and walked downstairs.

Before coming to matrimonial events, however, let us deal briefly with Mlle. Patti's share in the Covent Garden seasons that immediately preceded the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. During this period there was much in the way of

[1] "Mapleson Memoirs," Vol. I, p. 152.

repetition; also much that it will be more convenient to refer to as opportunity arises. In 1866 Mr. Gye's broken promises were not limited to "Le Nozze di Figaro." He had reëngaged Carlotta Patti and told his subscribers that she would appear in opera as the *Queen* in "Les Huguenots" and *Isabel* in "Roberto il Diavolo." She did neither. Of Carlotta as a stage singer the first and last was seen in America.[1] But the activities of Adelina more than atoned for the absence of her sister. It was in this year that habitués made acquaintance with her delicious *Caterina* in "L'Etoile du Nord"—an impersonation that they were to enjoy for the best part of twenty years, and nearly always supported by the same superb trio of men—Faure as *Peter the Great*, Naudin as *Danilowitz*, and Ciampi as *Gritzenko*. The *Prascovia* in the first instance was that excellent English soprano, Mme. Lemmens-Sherrington. Another addition to the list of Patti's new characters was *Annetta* in the Riccis' pretty opera, "Crispino e la Comare," with the great Ronconi as *Crispino*.

The *clou* of 1867 was described as "Romeo and Juliet," "an entirely new opera, composed by M. Gounod, and founded on Shakespeare's play." So introduced in the bill, and not under the Italian title that was used afterwards, this melodious work obtained, musically speaking, no more than a *succès d'estime*. Indeed, the critics were wont to declare that it owed its passing favor not so much to the music as to the glamour of the tragedy and the genius of Mario and Patti in the immortal name-parts. On the subject of Gounod's opera, and how it ultimately won its way to a popularity little if at all inferior to that of "Faust," there will be more to say in the next chapter.

During the first decade of her career at Covent Garden

[1] She appeared once in Philadelphia (in May, 1870) as the *Queen of Night* in "The Magic Flute," but the notices were again too discouraging.

MARIO AS FAUST

Adelina Patti appeared in nineteen rôles altogether, and in the following order: 1861—*Amina, Lucia, Violetta, Zerlina, Martha, Rosina;* 1862—*Norina, Dinorah;* 1863—*Leonora, Ninetta, Adina, Maria;* 1864—*Marguerite;* 1865—*Linda;* 1866—*Caterina, Annetta;* 1868—*Juliet;* 1869—*Gilda;* 1870—*Elvira* ("Puritani"). At the close of the season of 1868 a writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette* took occasion to pass in review her work down to that time, and summed up in these glowing terms:

Her career has been as honourably industrious as it has been uniformly successful. Richly endowed, she has not the less perseveringly studied to attain the perfection of detail indispensable to true art, and the defects observable when she first appeared among us have, with laborious and resolute striving, been conquered one by one. Her voice has grown richer and more flexible through constant use—a proof that its use has been legitimate; her vocalisation is as fluent and correct as it is brilliant and expressive. As an actress, both in the comic and serious range of characters, she has reached that acme of perfection which makes acting seem no acting at all, but rather truth idealised. Nothing can be more natural, graceful, and spontaneous than her comedy, nothing more deeply felt and touching than her tragedy. In short, she now presents to us the very *beau idéal* of a lyric artist.

Other eminent critics wrote to the same effect. Thus, in a number of the *Saturday Review*, in June, 1868, we read:

That Adelina Patti should be a universal favourite is not extraordinary; for it is no more than truth to say that she is the most versatile and accomplished of existing lyric comedians. In comic opera, in melodramatic opera, in serious opera, she is equally at home; and her repertory probably surpasses in variety and extent that of any singer we could name. The *Rosina, Lady Enrichetta, Lucia, Amina, Norina,* and *Zerlina* of Mlle. Patti are now the very best of the best. We could not say more if we were to write an

essay; and if we said less we should be unjust to Mlle. Patti, whose progress during the brief period of seven years—since, a girl phenomenon from the United States, she first appeared before an English audience in the character of *Amina*—is almost, if not quite, unexampled. To have matured herself from the imperfect though richly promising artist she was then into the perfect artist she is now, must have cost no end of thought and persevering study. But these have brought their fruits; and Mlle. Patti enjoys her reward in the unanimous opinion that now places her in the position she holds both as singer and as actress. Really great artists are nowadays uncommon; and Mlle. Patti is one of the very few that remain.

Meanwhile the home life at Clapham had continued its smooth and pleasant course without break—other than the intervals for foreign tours—down to the beginning of 1868. Then came the important event that was to surprise the world by adding the duties and responsibilities of a titled married lady to those already borne by a busy prima donna. In a word, to convert the admired diva into the charming wife of a French marquis.

The secret was well kept. For a long while the fascinating Adelina had been receiving what most girls would have considered tempting offers of marriage. She treated most of them with disdain and all alike with indifference, declaring that she would never marry except for love. But *souvent femme varie*; and it is to be suspected that she was still heart-whole when one day there "came along" a certain French nobleman, no longer in his first youth, yet elegant in bearing and refined in manner, whose attentions appear to have awakened in her sensations almost as pleasing as those peculiar to Cupid's own victims. Anyhow, she listened to him.

This distinguished gentleman was the Marquis de Caux,

head of a noble but by no means wealthy family, then holding the position of Equerry to Napoleon III at the Court of the Tuileries.

Now, the Emperor and the Empress Eugénie were both sincerely attached to Mlle. Patti. During her visits to Paris she was frequently invited to Court and sometimes received quite *en famille.* Their Majesties rarely missed one of her performances at the Théâtre-Italien; they led the applause, threw bouquets to her, and made her handsome presents. On these occasions they were always accompanied by the Marquis de Caux, who with equal regularity went to the back of the stage to convey the imperial congratulations. With him were generally two other scions of the French aristocracy, namely, the Vicomte d'Arry and the Baron de Saint-Amand; and all three gentlemen were madly in love with the bewitching artist. But the one with the most glib and fluent tongue, who could turn the neatest compliments without a suspicion of flattery, was the Marquis. In course of time he made an impression. Seeing which he went to the Empress, and without much trouble persuaded her to back him in a serious demand for the young lady's hand.

It took a little longer to gain the support of the Emperor; but, once it was promised, the Marquis de Caux stood in a very strong position. Few objections could be urged against the match. Mlle. Patti liked him well enough; thought herself more *éprise,* perhaps, than she really was. Maurice Strakosch was (to all appearance) in favor of it; and the demoiselle de compagnie, Fräulein Lauw, left no stone unturned to bring matters to a satisfactory conclusion. The only person who did not favor the Marquis's suit was dear old Salvatore Patti, Adelina's father. He did not like him, and openly said as much. Yet even he gave way at last, and in the spring of 1868, all obstacles being removed, the pair were duly be-

trothed. But nothing was to be said about it publicly until the end of the opera season.[1]

The wedding took place at the Roman Catholic church on Clapham Common on July 29, 1868, immediately after the termination of a Covent Garden season notable for several brilliant appearances with Mario. Patti and Mario sang together that year in "Romeo e Giulietta," "Faust," "Don Giovanni," and "Il Barbiere." They had appeared at her benefit on July 23, when the bill included acts from "Romeo," "Faust," and "La Figlia del Reggimento."[2] The great tenor was, of course, among the guests invited to the wedding. His daughter Rita was one of the bridesmaids; another being Miss Harris, elder sister of Mr. (afterwards Sir) Augustus Harris, whose father was then the stage-manager at Covent Garden.

The church was crowded, the ceremony taking place at the early hour of eleven o'clock in the morning. The

[1] A writer who was, both then and later, on intimate terms with Mme. Patti, has thus related the circumstances: "At the time she spoke to me very frankly respecting her plans, and told me how the Empress had encouraged her to go on working for five more years, until she had made an independent fortune, since the Marquis had only 10,000 francs (£400) a year; and that when the income derived from her new fortune secured her an independence, the Empress would receive her at court as a *dame d'honneur* with some palace honorarium, a position which, so long as she sang for money, she could not hold without wounding a number of vanities and prejudices." ("From Mozart to Mario," by Louis Engel.)

[2] Grove's Dictionary, by the way, in the revised edition, gives 1867 as the year of Mario's retirement, but that is incorrect. He sang in London again in 1870 and 1871. In his prospectus for 1868 Mr. Gye announced that Mario and Patti would both take part in an elaborate production of Rossini's early opera "L'Assedio di Corinth" ("The Siege of Corinth"), but the event never came off. A promise made in the same document to mount for Mme. Patti Verdi's forgotten Milanese failure, "Giovanna d'Arco," was also unredeemed, and her admirers were said to be much disappointed at missing the opportunity of seeing the diva in a suit of stage armor.

LINDA DI CHAMOUNI, 1867

GIOVANNA D'ARCO, 1868

bride is said to have looked "beautiful exceedingly" in a wedding gown of white satin trimmed with lace, the latest achievement of the famous Worth, of Paris. The witnesses who signed the marriage contract on her behalf were the Duke of Manchester and her old friend, "the celebrated conductor, Mr. Michael Costa." For the Marquis de Caux the signatories were his friends the Vicomte and the Baron. Among the bridal gifts was a costly one from the Emperor Napoleon and the Empress Eugénie, despatched by special courier from the Tuileries.

Only a few friends were invited to the wedding breakfast. Among them were two or three of the leading musical critics—one of these Mr. Sutherland Edwards, who tells us in his history of "The Prima Donna" that in course of the feast Mario whispered to him that "the Marquis, much as he might be attached to his fascinating bride, had never made love to her so much as he, her constant lover, had done."

The honeymoon was spent on the Continent. But before the end of August the Marquise de Caux—now known to the public as Mme. Adelina Patti—was at work upon the stage once more, fulfilling an annual summer engagement at Homburg. It is worthy of mention, if only for the fact that during this Homburg visit she made her first essay in the part of *Semiramide*. It was more or less of an experiment, but Rossini wished her to try it, and provided her with three entirely new cadenzas written expressly for the occasion.

Despite her success in this rôle, she did not sing it in London until ten years later.[1] It had long been associated there with the names of two glorious tragic artists, Grisi and Tietjens (the latter now at her best), and the public naturally regarded it as belonging exclusively to the repertory of a dramatic soprano. Rossini thought otherwise.

[1] See p. 194.

In Paris he always spoke of the gifted Henrietta Sontag as his ideal *Semiramide.* But he frankly declared that he saw Adelina Patti in the rôle, and she abundantly vindicated his opinion.

In the following November (1868) Rossini died. Mme. Patti was in Paris at the time, fulfilling a contract with M. Bagier for a series of eleven appearances at the Théâtre-Italien.[1] Fêted by the Court and all its *entourage*—then in the full splendor of the Second Empire—the Marquis and Marquise de Caux were the "lions" of a round of brilliant social engagements, over which the demise of the great composer cast a temporary shadow. It was arranged that the funeral ceremony should be preceded by a grand musical service at the newly erected Eglise de la Trinité. Among the artists who took part in it were Patti, Alboni, Nilsson and Faure.

The funeral requiem was made up entirely of pieces adapted from the serious works of Rossini. Thus, the "Liber scriptus" was sung to the music of the "Quis est homo" from the "Stabat Mater," and in this beautiful duet the voices of Adelina Patti and Marietta Alboni blended with an effect of beauty and pathos that Gounod described as "the most heavenly and touching musical moment of his whole existence." Many of the congregation were moved to tears. Hardly less sublime was the impression created by the same illustrious artists in an "Agnus Dei" for soloists and chorus, sung to the music of the well-known Prayer from "Mosè in Egitto." The entire function formed a worthy tribute to the memory of a great and honored master.

It may here be said that the relations between Rossini and his "*carissima* Adelina," during the five brief years that they knew each other, had been of the most cordial

[1] The total receipts for these performances amounted to 148,000 francs (nearly £6,000).

and affectionate kind. The scandal-mongers and mischief-makers of the time were wont, for reasons of their own, to amuse themselves by inventing anecdotes flavored with spurious Rossinian wit and uttered at the singer's expense. These mostly passed for genuine, especially that villainous pun which described the vocal ornaments written for her by her brother-in-law as "*strakoschonneries.*" [1] But when some of them were still quoted in memoirs on Rossini, long after his death, the following authoritative statement was inserted by James Davison in the *Musical World* (April, 1869):

We are tired of insisting that ninety-nine out of a hundred of the so-called *bon mots* attributed to Rossini are the pure fabrication of the Parisian *petite presse* and small wits of the Boulevards. That he never addressed an ungallant speech to Mme. Patti or invented the silly play upon the name of M. Strakosch, here for the fiftieth time attributed to him, we have had *his own positive assurance.* It is very unlikely indeed that Rossini would imply in one sentence that Mme. Patti had learnt nothing, and in the next that she sang his music divinely. He was not quite so modest as all that.

The fact remains, nevertheless, that when Rossini first

[1] As to this accusation, the brother-in-law speaks for himself ("Souvenirs d'un Impresario," p. 69): "According to Rossini, the airs in his operas were not always to be sung as they were written; the artists might allow themselves changes (*variantes*). It is worth while to observe that Rossini alluded to the artists of his time, who did not go upon the stage until after long study and who were themselves skilful musicians. Perhaps to-day [1887], when tenors and *prime donne* are manufactured in a few months, Rossini would modify his opinion.

"Thus, in the 'Barber of Seville,' the rôle of *Rosina* had been written for a contralto, and is very often sung by sopranos. It would be impossible for a soprano to sing it as Rossini wrote it. This remark was made by the master àpropos of a newspaper article in which the critic declared that in this same opera Rossini's music had been *strakoschonnée.* The truth is that Maurice Strakosch had introduced for Mlle. Adelina Patti changes which she always used [until Bevignani, as we shall see, wrote new ones for her], and which were approved by Rossini himself."

heard Adelina Patti sing "Una voce" he declared in his usual jocular manner that he was unable to recognize it as his own music.

The winter of 1868–69 was spent by Mme. Patti in Russia, where her triumphs, like her artistic growth, continued on the upward scale. For several years in succession she regularly visited St. Petersburg and Moscow, and never failed (as Mr. Gye put it in his prospectus for 1874) to "bear away from both cities substantial and magnificent marks of imperial and public admiration." This was literally true. The Czar Alexander, after conferring upon her the Order of Merit, appointed her a Court singer, and later presented her with an order set in brilliants, besides other handsome souvenirs. The nobility showered costly gifts upon her at each performance. No wonder, then, that a writer who knew her well once said: "The diamonds she carried away from Russia constituted in themselves a small fortune."[1]

This was long prior to the days of the Russian opera and the Russian ballet that London afterwards knew. But the Russians were always devoted lovers of good music, and their fondness for Italian opera dated from before the era when Glinka founded their national school. The fact that they were keen, sincere critics lends the greater value, therefore, to such appreciations as the following, which appeared in the *Journal de St. Pétersburg* early in 1869:

In Adelina Patti we find virtuosity *par excellence.* We have here, in the first place, an exceptional and unrivalled voice, intonation *juste à toute épreuve,* an admirable method, and miracles without number of agility and wonderful feats of mechanical skill. This is not perhaps the result of any great application on her part; it is the result of a most happy and peculiar organisation—it is the

[1] "From Mozart to Mario," by Louis Engel.

IN ST. PETERSBURG, 1869

natural singing of a bird created to sing. . . . The first time you hear her you are astonished; you are dazzled by the vocal pyrotechnic display, the flute-like arabesques in the highest register possible to the human voice (going up to the high F) are something so striking, and then, suddenly forming such a contrast to them, the full, sonorous phrases of a mellow voice in the lowest notes of a genuine soprano. A moment afterwards you find yourself under the spell of a beautiful, perfect style of execution. The *maestria* of "simple" singing cannot go farther than in the airs of *Zerlina* as sung by Mme. Patti.

The year 1869 was that of the extraordinary "coalition" season at Covent Garden, when, Her Majesty's Theatre not being yet rebuilt after the fire of the previous summer, Messrs. Gye and Mapleson joined their powerful forces, alike with advantage to the public and profit—unprecedented profit—to themselves. During that season Mme. Patti appeared in a round of familiar characters. The chief hit was once more "Don Giovanni." It was given several times, with a cast that included Patti as *Zerlina,* Tietjens as *Donna Anna,* Christine Nilsson as *Donna Elvira,* Mario as *Don Ottavio,* and Faure as the *Don*—perhaps the most remarkable operatic combination of the nineteenth century.

To complete the record of these wonderful "sixties" we must briefly revert to the March of 1868, when Verdi's forgotten opera "Giovanna d'Arco," came to its first Parisian hearing at the Théâtre des Italiens. Despite the radiant beauty and indubitable genius of the Italian soprano, Erminia Frezzolini, the opera (it was written just after "Ernani") had been an absolute failure at the Scala in 1845. Yet now, twenty-three years later, it was revived in the hope that Adelina Patti would succeed in accomplishing what her gifted predecessor had been unable to do. But the task lay beyond her powers, exactly as Verdi had feared

when he reluctantly gave his consent for the opera to be produced in Paris. The experience of Frezzolini had shown him that whatever success it might temporarily enjoy would be entirely due to the protagonist of the title-rôle.

Patti as *Joan of Arc* made a captivating picture in helmet and armor. She sang superbly, and "lent her admirable talent to the most ungrateful part of her répertoire." She galvanized the finer musical passages with something of her own exquisite charm; but she could not imbue with consistency or lasting interest a creation that represents the Maid of Orleans in an absurd if not an objectionable light. M. Arthur Pougin tells us, "After a few performances the work was completely abandoned." [1]

[1] "The Life and Works of Verdi," London, 1887.

CHAPTER XIII

Married Life (1869)—Maurice and the Marquis—Entertainments in Paris—Patti at Covent Garden in the Seventies—First Impressions of Her as *Zerlina* and *Giulietta*—Gounod's "Romeo" in Italian with Patti and Mario—She Creates *Aïda* at Covent Garden—A Fresh Revelation of Genius in Composer and Singer—New Characters and Old—Operas Written for Patti—Her *Valentina* at This Period—End of the Gye Régime—With Scalchi in "Semiramide"—Divorced from the Marquis de Caux (1885)—Marriage with Nicolini (1886)

AFTER her marriage with the Marquis de Caux most of the singer's spare time, naturally, was spent in Paris. The house in Clapham had been given up. Salvatore Patti was growing old and being no longer required to accompany his daughter on her travels, he went to live in Paris with M. and Mme. Maurice Strakosch in order to be near her as much as possible. He was not, however, to enjoy that pleasure long, for he died there on August 20, 1869, just fifteen months after the union to which, according to Maurice Strakosch, he had from the first been sternly opposed.

The worthy Maurice himself held the fixed opinion that prima donnas, actresses, and dancers should never marry under any circumstances. "The joys of the domestic hearth," he said, "are not always for artists; family life is rarely suited to those idols of the public whose existence is passed in an imaginary world, and who sometimes have neither the time nor the wish to appreciate the happiness to be derived from the peace and calm of a simple life." [1]

[1] "Souvenirs d'un Impresario," p. 55. M. Strakosch goes on to enumerate, in confirmation of his opinion, the examples of Marie Taglioni, Malibran, Bosio, Frezzolini, Grisi, Lucca, Trebelli, Marie Sasse, and Marie Heilbron, all of whom separated from their husbands.

Evidently in his heart of hearts he did not like the Marquis. They were not on bad terms; indeed, as we have seen, both he and the father were present at the wedding. Nevertheless, according to his own account, that event marked the rupture of relations between Maurice and his sister-in-law, or rather, as he puts it, "between the impresario and his pupil." He hastens to state that the separation was purely voluntary on his part; for, several times, he says, the Marquis de Caux asked him to continue in the position he had previously held "*auprès de Mme. Patti.*" "These offers, however advantageous and honorable for him to whom they were made, were refused. Having always been against the marriage, the brother-in-law of Adelina Patti would often have been in a rather false position *vis-à-vis* of the Marquis de Caux."

Whether the latter was quite so anxious to retain his services as he tries to make out, we have reason to doubt. It is also open to question how far the new Marquise herself was responsible for the "rupture," seeing that she had been a good many years under Maurice's tutelage and control, and must have been rather pleased than otherwise at the prospect of a greater measure of freedom. Still, there was no quarrel. Strakosch insists that their excellent relations did not cease after the marriage, when, "in relinquishing his duties as impresario, he placed in her hands contracts signed by the directors of the chief European opera houses, and the total of those contracts amount to the sum of 1,600,000 francs [about £64,000], extending over a period of three years."[1]

Maurice Strakosch foresaw trouble, and the event proved him to have been right. We shall come to that soon enough. Meanwhile the *lune de miel* was shining brightly, and the seasons in Homburg, Paris, and Russia succeeded each other

[1] "Souvenirs d'un Impresario," p. 60.

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amid a steady crescendo of artistic and social triumphs. During their stay in the French capital in the autumn of 1869 they were frequently guests of the Emperor and Empress at the Tuileries. They also entertained a good deal at their own residence, and their receptions were attended by the leading notabilities in the worlds of music, drama, art and literature.

At one of these *intime* affairs the famous Alboni applauded the singing of her hostess; and Auber, being asked what he thought of her, replied: "I have seen and heard many singers. I remember Catalani, Pasta, Malibran, Grisi, and Sontag. But I never heard so perfect an artist as Patti. As for her voice, it is without a flaw." This was a tremendous comparison to make; but the old French master was no flatterer: he meant what he said.

They were staying that season at the Hôtel du Rhin, in the Place Vendôme, and when the Prince of Orange (Crown Prince of the Netherlands) came to Paris the Marquis and Marquise de Caux gave a reception and entertainment in his honor, which was attended by the flower of the French nobility, then living their last few months of splendor ere the sun set upon the glories of the Second Empire. It was a memorable night; the crowd was exceedingly brilliant, and the Prince is said to have enjoyed the concert amazingly. No wonder. Not only did Patti herself sing, but she provided a *morceau d'ensemble* of a wholly unique description, in the shape of the trio from Cimarosa's opera "Il Matrimonio Segreto," the artists being the three sisters, Amalia, Carlotta, and Adelina. They had never sung together before, and they were never to sing together again.

It is generally acknowledged that the period during which Adelina Patti was the Marquise de Caux—in fact, the decade covering the whole of the seventies—marked the zenith

of her career. As good fortune would have it, it was during the early part of that period, in 1872, that the writer of this chronicle first heard her at Covent Garden. It was her twelfth season in Great Britain, and she had not yet attained her thirtieth birthday. She was, in short, at the very height of her powers.

This most memorable of all my operatic experiences happened on a Whit-Monday.[1] The stalls and boxes were a trifle less crowded than usual, on account of the holiday. Nevertheless, it presented a sufficiently brilliant and—to my unaccustomed eyes—dazzling spectacle. Mr. Gye, in his corner stage-box on the pit tier, was duly pointed out to me; and I recall the entry of a dapper little gentleman, wearing a broad shirtfront and spotless white waistcoat, who took his place in the stalls near the orchestra during the second scene of "Don Giovanni." I was informed that he was the Marquis de Caux. He was just in time to witness the entry of *Zerlina* when she danced on with Masetto. And a lovelier picture than the dainty diva in her piquant Spanish costume it would indeed have been hard to conjure up.

It is scarcely necessary to say that every incident of that night became ineffaceably imprinted upon my memory. My impressions of the scene, the music, the singing, the whole performance, in fact, still remain extraordinarily vivid. From boyhood upward (in my native city of Norwich and later in London) I had listened to a good deal of opera. I had heard the best of Mr. Mapleson's vocal stars—Tietjens, Nilsson, Ilma di Murska, Marimon, Trebelli. Although only a lad of sixteen, my ear was sufficiently educated to

[1] I remember the day because I had been to Sheerness to see Brunel's huge maritime wonder, the *Great Eastern*, and on my return home I found that our friend, Mr. John Mitchell, the well-known Bond Street "librarian," had sent us seats for "Don Giovanni," with Patti as *Zerlina*. There was just time to change and hurry off to the Opera.

appreciate the art of the greatest singer of the day; at the same time, I could fairly estimate the qualities which made her the most ravishing *Zerlina* that Da Ponte or Mozart can ever have conceived.

I recollect more especially the strange, dark, penetrating timbre—the *voix sombre,* as Garcia classified it—of Patti's voice. How unlike it sounded to any other I had heard—so individual in quality, so perfectly in harmony with the personality of the singer, so elusive in its witchery, so satisfying and entrancing to the ear! Incomparable, too, were her technique and art. Never before, of course, had I heard the familiar "Batti, batti," or "Vedrai carino" sung with this astounding perfection of easy grace, of persuasive charm, of pellucid tone in uninterrupted flow, enhancing even the intrinsic loveliness of Mozart's immortal melodies.

It was a joy to hear her in the concerted music, above all in "La ci darem," partnered with that consummate artist, Faure, king of French baritones and prince of *Don Giovannis!* Nicolini was the *Don Ottavio,* Ciampi the *Leporello,* and a Dresden soprano, Emmy Zimmermann, the *Donna Anna.* Otherwise not the least interesting member of the cast was the subsequently famous Viennese singer, Marianne Brandt, who in this same season made her first London appearance as *Donna Elvira.*[1]

Three years elapsed before I heard Patti again. It was in May, 1875, and I recollect then sitting in the *Daily Telegraph* box with my friend and harmony teacher, A. H. Thouless, who introduced me for the first time to Joseph Bennett, the eminent critic, his future father-in-law.

The opera was Gounod's "Roméo e Giulietta"—so entitled because sung at this time in the Italian version only.

[1] Mr. Gye had engaged her to create *Elsa;* but "Lohengrin," although it had been definitely promised in 1872, was not given until 1875, and then Emma Albani undertook the rôle.

It had not been heard at Covent Garden since Mario's retirement, seven years before, when the rôle of *Giulietta* was filled by the same artist. It had failed to please every one then. Bennett never cared for it. Writing in the *Musical Times* of August, 1867, he said:

> In the balcony scene occurs some of the best music in the opera. A cavatina for *Romeo* would have produced more effect had Signor Mario been in better voice; but he was hoarse throughout the evening, and it was an evident labour for him to sing at all. The duet between the two lovers, although full of charming passages, breathes little of the Southern warmth and impetuosity so exquisitely portrayed by Shakespeare; and, notwithstanding that Mlle. Patti sang like a finished artist throughout this trying scene, the music was somewhat coldly received. . . . The opera was excellently placed upon the stage; but, in spite of the reputation of M. Gounod, the great success of the work in Paris, and the unquestionable merit of much of the music, we do not predict for it a lasting popularity with the English public.

Mario was too old for the part of *Romeo;* in 1867 he was very nearly sixty. Moreover, his voice was beginning to fail, and the statement that he was "hoarse" was only another way of hinting at that regrettable fact. His place in the present revival was filled by Ernest Nicolini, who had now been singing at Covent Garden since 1873 and was generally regarded as the best available tenor for the Mario parts. With Patti and Nicolini "Romeo e Giulietta" pleased the public rather better, but still did not approach within measurable distance of the popularity of "Faust," which, with the same singers and Faure in the cast, would attract overflowing houses.

Being now an impressionable youth of nineteen, I ought presumably to have gone into raptures over this performance of "Romeo." Yet I must confess that it left me cold. Nicolini's delineation of the hero was disappointing. It

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In "Diamants de la Couronne," 1870

lacked manly dignity, robust spirit, the true ring of tragedy. There was not sufficient tenderness in his rendering of the music; he was lovesick enough, but his acting lacked color, variety, depth of character. Of Patti's *Giulietta* I can only say that she sang divinely, more especially in the waltz air and the duet of the balcony scene; but as a whole her performance struck me as too calm, too restrained. This does not mean that she did not satisfy her public. The *Juliettes* of a later day were adjudged admirable in the part, notwithstanding that their acting exhibited precisely similar deficiencies. But from Patti it was only natural to expect a great deal, and at this period her delineation of this rôle was assuredly not to be ranked with her *Caterina,* her *Violetta,* her *Leonora,* or her *Valentina.*

Thirteen years later there was a different story to tell. In November, 1888, "Roméo et Juliette" underwent a kind of transformation in the city where it was first brought to a hearing. Removed by order of the State from the Opera Comique to the Paris Opéra, provided with an entirely new *mise en scène* and cast, musically revised and added to by the still energetic composer, it acquired a fresh lease of life, and therewith a place in popular favor that it had never filled before. On that memorable occasion Mme. Patti was again the *Juliette,* and like the opera itself, improved beyond recognition. But the incidents of this fragment of musical history shall be duly related in their proper place.[1] First let us deal with a yet more notable creation belonging to this ripe "middle period" of the artist's career.

The great event of the London operatic season of 1876 was the production of Verdi's "Aïda," which I had the good luck to witness from the front row of the Covent

[1] See Chapter XVI; also the author's "Thirty Years of Musical Life in London," pp. 259–265.

Garden gallery, after a patient "wait" of six hours at the doors. The work was then four and a half years old. Written at the request of the Khedive Ismail, it was first given at the new Opera House in Cairo (as one of the celebrations in connection with the opening of the Suez Canal) on December 24, 1871, and subsequently brought out at La Scala, Milan, in February of the following year.

In each instance it was acclaimed with enthusiasm as a work marking a fresh epoch not only in the composer's career but in the history of Italian opera. The complete change of style from Verdi's "second manner" was with wonder noted, and in London at least opera-goers were prepared to welcome a new musical development; for in the previous summer they had made acquaintance with Wagner's "Lohengrin," and in this same season of 1876 (six weeks earlier) had enjoyed their first hearing of "Tannhäuser."

Moreover, in the month of May Verdi himself had come to London to conduct the first performance in England of his noble "Requiem," bringing with him as soloists three of the artists—Teresina Stolz, Waldmann, and Masini—who had taken part (on April 22) in the production of "Aïda" at the Théâtre-Italien in Paris. After affording us this wonderful glimpse of the new Verdi, the master declined an invitation to remain for the *première* of "Aïda" at Covent Garden and took his departure.

He had long been aware, however, that the title-rôle was to be created in London by Adelina Patti. She had, while in Italy, visited him at his villa at Brussetto and carefully gone through the part with him. Mr. Gye had duly announced the fact in his prospectus, together with the proud statement that "The exclusive right of performance of 'Aïda' in England has been secured by the director of the Royal Italian Opera." All this was planned through the medium of Verdi's Milan publishers, the house of Ricordi,

of which the late courteous and talented Giulio di Ricordi was at that time the head.

Now, if the advent of "Aïda" furnished a conspicuous landmark in the onward progress of the composer's art, it certainly indicated a similar advance in that of the accomplished prima donna who interpreted the principal rôle in the initial London performance.

The wiseacres of the period did not expect to be satisfied. They shook their heads and declared that they could not see her in the character. "It is not," said one of them, "a Patti part. Imagine the fragile and gracious Adelina with her face and arms dyed black, or at least a rich copper color—darker, anyhow, than Pauline Lucca made herself as Selika in 'L'Africaine'!" Then the music—would it suit her? Portions of it, perhaps, such as the solo air "Cieli azzuri" in the third act; but as a whole was it not essentially written for a dramatic soprano, for a singer with a much heavier voice? As to whether she would rise to the demands of the part in a histrionic sense—that being in her case somewhat a question of mood—opinions were rather more divided.

However, all doubts were set at rest, all sceptical prophecies wholly belied, on June 22, 1876, when "Aïda" was performed at Covent Garden for the first time, with Vianesi as conductor. That production provided the occasion not only for an unprecedented tribute to the genius of Verdi, but for an all-round individual triumph such as Adelina Patti had not yet won during her entire seventeen years of operatic life. It stands easily first among the many exciting Patti nights that remain indelibly engraved upon the memory of the present writer.

There was a remarkable sense of newness about the whole thing. To begin with, the Egyptian *mise en scène*—copying almost exactly the original Khedival model, with its temples

of the Pharaohs, its palaces on the Nile, and its wonderful two-storied interior "set" where the lovers are interned alive—unfolded a series of pictures familiar enough to-day, but at that time entirely unknown to the opera-goer. As to the eye, so to the ear did "Aïda" furnish a complete revelation. The music, with its original Eastern coloring and exotic atmosphere, its novel harmonies (so unlike the earlier Verdi), its bold effects, such as the masterly combination of themes in the second finale (not forgetting the specially designed long trumpets), and the magnificent orchestration throughout—all this, apart from the unique personality of the central figure, sufficed to impart a new artistic quality to the representation. The grim Egyptian tragedy, laid out by the Frenchman Camille du Locle and set forth in verse by the Italian Ghislanzoni, was considered equal to the best grand opera libretto that Scribe had ever written for Meyerbeer; and that was saying much.

Yet, amid all the novel features of the production, none was more striking than the change that had come over the art of the great singer who filled the title-rôle. There was a new note of tragic feeling in the voice; there were shades of poignant expression in the "Ritorna vincitor," the "Cieli azzuri," and the three superb duets in which *Aïda* takes part, that seemed to embrace the whole gamut of human misery and passion. Such tragic depths Adelina Patti had never plumbed before. And, of all the splendid *Aïdas* that have since appeared in London, not one has presented a more highly colored or less exaggerated picture.

She had personally superintended the preparation of her costumes. It was suggested that she should order them from Cairo, or Paris, but she insisted on their being made at Covent Garden from fresh designs. "Fanciful dresses of this sort," she declared, "are always best made for me in the theatre." Naturally, very great trouble was taken to

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have everything right. She did not want *Aïda* to look like another *Selika,* but an African princess of a different and more individual type. That she succeeded was the general opinion. The light brown complexion of her skin seemed just the right shade, neither excessively dark nor the opposite. Still *Aïda* was an entirely new figure in opera, and on the first night at Covent Garden her aspect evoked sympathy for the artist from no less august a critic than the Princess of Wales (now Queen Alexandra). Turning to the equerry beside her in the royal box (he afterwards told Mme. Patti), her Royal Highness exclaimed: "What a pity for the pretty little face to be all smothered up with black!"

Nicolini was the *Radamès.* He gave a far finer portrayal of the Egyptian warrior than of the Teutonic *Knight of the Swan,* whom he had also presented to an English audience for the first time during the previous season. The best tenor of his day in parts that suited him, Nicolini entirely failed to comprehend either the poetry or the music of "Lohengrin"; but he was a magnificent *Radamès.*[1]

Considering the unusual length of her career in opera, the number of characters actually created by Mme. Patti was comparatively insignificant. At Covent Garden she ap-

[1] "No one in London has ever sung the tenor part in 'Aïda' as it was sung for some years by Signor Nicolini." Thus writes Mr. Sutherland Edwards in his book, "The Prima Donna." But it must be remembered that this appreciation was published a few months before Jean de Reszke made his début as *Radamès* at Drury Lane in 1887, and fifteen years prior to Caruso's triumph in the same character at Covent Garden. Mr. Kuhe, by the way, in his "Recollections," refers to Nicolini's remarkable resemblance to Mario, and adds: "He was very handsome; his voice was a real tenor of exceeding beauty and most artistically managed, while his acting was both manly and graceful. Nicolini had been originally trained at the Paris Conservatoire as a pianist; but, making the discovery that he possessed a voice of fine calibre, he wisely devoted himself to its cultivation. He retired from public life far too soon, . . . but he prefers to lead the life of a country squire."

peared altogether in eight new rôles. Of these, however, only two occurred in operas not already heard elsewhere: namely, "Gelmina," by Princess Poniatowski (June 4, 1872), and "Velleda," a four-act opera by Charles Lenepveu, founded upon Chateaubriand's "Les Martyrs" (July 4, 1882). The others were *Annetta* in "Crispino e la Comare" (July 14, 1866); *Juliet* in "Romeo e Giulietta" (July 11, 1867); *Esmeralda* in Campana's opera of that name (June 14, 1870); *Caterina* in Auber's "Les Diamants de la Couronne" (July 3, 1873); *Aïda* (June 22, 1876); and *Estella* in Jules Cohen's "Les Bluets" (July 3, 1880), given in Italian under the title of "Estella."

Of those not already mentioned, two characters only took a conspicuous place in the singer's repertory, namely *Annetta* and *Caterina*.[1] Campana's "Esmeralda" met with some success, but survived only for a season or two. It was originally produced in London in 1862, then heard of no more until mounted at St. Petersburg for Mme. Patti in December, 1869. "Gelmina" and "Velleda" were both written expressly for her. One remembers Prince Poniatowski's merry ballad, "The Yeoman's Wedding," made popular by Santley; but of his opera every note has long

[1] Noticing a revival of "Crispino," the *Musical World* observed that it was "rendered especially attractive by the rich comic humour of Signor Ronconi as the cobbler, and the exquisitely refined singing and acting of Mlle. Adelina Patti as the cobbler's wife. . . . The wonder is that such a coarse lout as the cobbler *Crispino* should be possessed of such a charming wife as the *Annetta* of Mlle. Patti. However, if the consistency of dramatic truth is hereby invaded, the effect of the opera and the delight of the audience are immeasurably enhanced. Her condolences with her husband in their wretched poverty, her effort to aid him, her pleadings for pity at the hands of his creditors, her pettish jealousy at *Crispino's* description of the fairy's gift, her reconciliation with him, and that inimitable dance with which she accompanies the brilliant *roulades* expressive of her exultation at their good fortune—such a combination of exuberant animal spirits, refinement of manner, and high vocal excellence is rarely found in one singer."

been forgotten. The music of "Velleda" was equally uninspired and made little or no impression, in spite of an exceedingly good performance, wherein Mme. Patti was supported by Mme. Valleria, Mlle. Stahl, Nicolini, Cotogni, and Edouard de Reszke. "Les Bluets" was first brought out at the Théâtre-Lyrique, Paris, in 1867, with Nilsson as *Estella*. Neither the book nor M. Jules Cohen's music proved particularly attractive then; and, when given at Covent Garden thirteen years later, it was generally agreed that Mme. Patti would have done better to leave the opera to the oblivion that it deserved.[1]

On the whole, however, it must be admitted that admirable discretion was shown in the choice of her repertory. For this, in the early days, the credit should go to her father and to Maurice Strakosch. The parts that they picked out for her were the parts she sang during the greater portion of her career.

Even a heavy rôle like *Valentina* in "Les Huguenots" (which she first essayed when a girl at New Orleans, then took up again at Liége on her return from Russia in 1870) remained for some years her favorite *tour de force* on the occasion of her "annual benefit" at Covent Garden. She sang it there first in July, 1871, with no less distinguished a *Raoul* than Mario, who two or three nights later bade fare-

[1] In a review of the opera season, shortly after the production of "Velleda" at Covent Garden, the author wrote as follows in the *Sunday Times* of July 23, 1882:

"As for 'Velleda,' we can only trust that its failure will prove a lesson to Mme. Patti not to bring over any more unknown operas by obscure Frenchmen for Mr. Gye to produce simply because they provide soprano parts well suited to the diva's voice and means. Even the genius of Mme. Patti cannot redeem from mediocrity music that would not otherwise be thought worth taking out of a composer's portfolio; but as yet not one of her numerous *trouvailles* has turned out a prize, and the only result has been to exclude operas that have already gained Continental fame or new works by native musicians who can write as well as either M. Cohen or M. Lenepveu."

well to the stage as *Fernando* in "La Favorita"; but the critics, albeit full of admiration for the talent displayed in this effort, would not allow that it was entirely successful. Here is a specimen of the guarded kind of language they wrote:

> We are so convinced of the earnestness of Mme. Patti in whatever she attempts that we prefer awaiting another opportunity of forming a judgment as to her capabilities for excelling in the new sphere to which she is now apparently directing her strength. Though a first experience does not justify a verdict of unqualified approval, it is equally insufficient, on the other hand, to warrant condemnation without appeal. The performances of no artist whom we can call to mind have been worthier calm and deliberate consideration than those of Mme. Patti.

Two years later the *Musical World* said:

> Although the fresh effort, brilliant as it undoubtedly was, has not changed our opinion that *Valentina* is among those characters which, for certain reasons, do not lie easily within her means, there were features in Mme. Patti's impersonation which placed it apart from any other *Valentina* we have seen.

The allusion here was undoubtedly to the rare individuality, the supreme beauty of her singing in this part. While absolutely traditional as a reading, it yet seemed to impart a new aspect to the music. Even Joseph Bennett was constrained to say in the *Daily Telegraph:* "Not in our recollection at least, has the music of Meyerbeer's *Valentina* received so refined, unforced, rigidly accurate, and masterly a reading."

Another sound adviser was Frederick Gye. So long as he stood at the helm at the Royal Italian Opera, his chief prima donna's few errors of judgment were restricted to those instances in which "undue influence" got the best of her good sense and good nature. One or two of these have

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been cited, but Mr. Gye (no doubt after consultation with Costa) generally counselled the right thing. He may, as we have seen, have had a habit of strengthening his prospectus at her expense. Thus he put her down for Rossini's "Donna del Lago" in 1871 and for Verdi's "Vêpres Siciliennes" in 1877, and neither promise was kept.

But the unfulfilled production of "Carmen" set down for Mme. Patti in 1878, and that of "Mireille" in 1880, whether seriously intended or not, ought not to be credited to Mr. Gye. He had, as a matter of fact, retired from management in 1877, and in December, 1878, he was killed by a gun accident. With his departure the "halcyon days" of Italian opera may be said to have ended.

On the other hand, Patti prolonged for a brief space the life of operas that displayed her gifts to the highest advantage, but whose Italian popularity was even then moribund. Among these may be mentioned Rossini's "Otello" (1871), wherein she had Mongini and Graziani for her associates. Davison thought her impersonation of *Desdemona* quite remarkable:

> Her reading of the character is not that of Pasta and Grisi, but that of Malibran and Sophie Cruvelli—the genuine reading, we can but think. Mme. Patti's *Desdemona,* while in certain forcible situations highly impassioned, is eminently graceful and sympathetic. She is able to achieve the combination of pathetic sentiment with florid execution. . . . The last act is her very finest. The exquisitely plaintive "Willow Song" is most touching. The embellishments—Rossini's own, by the way—are as perfectly executed as they are perfectly composed (*Times*).

Again, in 1873, when Verdi's "Ernani" was mounted for the first time at Covent Garden, no one fell in love with the opera; but the triumph of the *Elvira,* according to the same authority, was indisputable:

It is always agreeable to hear Mme. Patti in some new part. She invariably brings a reading of her own and puts the stamp of her individuality upon whatever she undertakes. Since Sophie Cruvelli, who possessed unlimited means for the task, we have not heard the music of *Elvira* sung so uniformly well, except by Angelina Bosio; while it would be difficult to imagine anything more poetically conceived, more justly balanced, or more thoroughly finished than Mme. Patti's dramatic realisation.

And so with the same composer's "Luisa Miller" in the following year:

In spite of Mme. Patti's admirable performance,—and admirable it is from beginning to end, worthy of the great artist whom all acknowledge,—it is nevertheless very doubtful if "Luisa Miller" can, under any circumstances, keep the stage.

These operas were revived occasionally, then by degrees fell out of the current repertory. Such, however, was not the fate of Rossini's "Semiramide," when Mme. Patti made up her mind to attempt at Covent Garden the Homburg "honeymoon" rôle so long identified in London with Grisi and Tietjens.

Her venture was justified by one of the most emphatic of all her successes. Given during the season of 1878, with Scalchi as *Arsace* and Maurel as *Assur,* the opera entered upon a new lease of life, which endured as long as the stage life of the diva herself. I remember the night well, more especially for two things—Patti's magnificent singing of "Bel raggio" with the new Rossini changes and cadenzas; and the extraordinary effect that she created with Scalchi in the famous duet, "Giorno d'orrore." I thought the audience would bring the roof down.

Let it be noted that she had deferred her appearance in London as *Semiramide* until after the death of Tietjens, which occurred in 1877. This was wise, because the char-

acter had long been associated in the minds of the public with the ample and imposing personality of that artist, and it was difficult for old opera-goers to visualize a real *Semiramide* in the *svelte* and delicate figure of their beloved Adelina. "She will be singing *Norma* next," said one grumpy habitué in my hearing.[1] Nevertheless, every one accepted her in the new part without the smallest reserve, and had perforce to admit that Rossini's judgment in the matter had been entirely correct. The general verdict was fairly reflected in the *Pall Mall Gazette:*

> That Mme. Patti would find all the music of *Semiramide* well within her resources must have been known beforehand to everyone who had ever heard her in Rossinian opera. Others were aware that her impersonation would, in a dramatic point of view, be all that could be desired. Mme. Patti does not walk the stage like a conventional stage queen, with measured step, lofty bearing, and head slightly thrown back in token of general disdain. Always natural, always entering into the spirit of the character she undertakes, she is queenly, not through any deliberate assumption of regal airs, but because in the exercise of her high dramatic faculty she becomes *Semiramide* herself. She is as queenly as it is possible to be without ceasing to be womanly.

In attacking one of Pauline Lucca's greatest rôles, *Selika* in "L'Africaine," Patti was not upon equally safe ground. The new part, which she first tried at Covent Garden in 1879 (Nicolini the *Vasco di Gama;* Lassalle, then making his début, the *Nelusko*), pleased only a few thick-and-thin admirers. Comparing the two *Selikas,* one critic said: "Mme. Lucca's African queen, admirable according to her individual conception, partakes more or less of the ideal savage; while that of Mme. Patti, in every accent, look, and gesture, reveals the

[1] And why not? She would have made a splendid *Norma.* Yet somehow the part did not appeal to her, and after her childhood she scarcely ever sang "Casta diva."

tender, anxious, devoted woman.'' The latter was not, of course, sufficient to constitute the real *Selika*. Truth to tell, she never really felt at home in the part, and only sang it two or three times altogether.

The ''Aïda'' year (1876) was big with fate for the heroine of these pages. For some time rumor had been busy with stories that suggested growing unhappiness in the marital relations between the Marquise de Caux and the Marquis. Those stories were not exaggerated. The pair had been married nearly eight years, but it had not taken them all that time to discover that they were ill suited to each other. During the first year or two things had gone tolerably well. After that husband and wife began to disagree, until finally they found that there was scarcely a question upon which they were of one mind. Then they came to the conclusion tthat it was time to part. Accordingly, a formal separation took place in 1877.

Meanwhile—to complete this part of our story—the Marquis de Caux continued to live in Paris, and duly intimated his intention of sequestrating whatever sums his wife might earn in France. She made it a point not to sing there. In 1884, however, all obstacles to a legal separation were removed by Mme. Patti making an offer to divide her fortune with the Marquis. His share was said to have amounted to about a million and a half francs. In the following year both parties sued in the French courts for a divorce, and after considerable delay it was granted in 1885. Thenceforward the Marquis disappears from the scene.

In 1886 Mme. Patti was married to Signor Nicolini. They provided themselves with an English—or, rather, a Welsh—home, having purchased the freehold of a beautiful estate in the Swansea Valley, now familiar to all the world as Craig-y-Nos Castle. This name is derived from the Craig-

MARIE
Fille du Regiment, 1871

y-Nos, or "Mountain of the Night," facing the spot on which the castle was erected. It has been correctly described as an "oasis in the desert"; for, while the scenery in this part of the valley is very striking, the surrounding country for many miles is wild and rugged without being interesting. The castle itself was greatly improved and enlarged by Mme. Patti; but upon this subject there will be more to say in a subsequent chapter.

The civil contract of the marriage with Signor Nicolini was signed before the French Consul in Swansea on June 9, 1886. The witnesses were M. Thomas Johnson (of the Paris *Figaro*) and Mr. Wilhelm Ganz, both old friends of the bride. On the return to Craig-y-Nos Castle congratulatory addresses were presented on behalf of various local bodies. Next day the religious ceremony was performed at the (Protestant) parish church of the neighboring village of Ystradgynlais, in the presence of a crowded congregation. The vicar, the Rev. G. Glanby, officiated, assisted by two curates. The bride was led to the altar by M. Maynard, of Paris, and Wilhelm Ganz acted as best man.

CHAPTER XIV

Patti and Personal Influences—Her New Secretary, Franchi—The Question of Higher Fees—Strakosch Justifies the Advance—Nilsson and Patti Lead the Way—Tours in Italy (1878–80)—America Revisited—Experimental Tour in 1881 a Failure Owing to Bad Management—Better Results under Mapleson (1882)—Three Operatic Seasons in the United States; Terms Rising to £1,000 a Night—Opposition in New York (1883)—The Metropolitan and German Opera—Visits to Salt Lake City and San Francisco—Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the New York Début—The Banquet and Various Celebrations—Mapleson's Talent for Descriptive and Other Accounts

THE contrast between the artificial *mélange* of aristocratic and artistic surroundings heretofore imposed upon the Marquise de Caux, and the tranquil, solid domestic ménage now formed by Mme. Adelina Patti-Nicolini was extremely marked. The effect of the change quickly became perceptible to her more intimate friends; and it did not diminish as time went on. She was always very impressionable and—alike as a woman and an artist—peculiarly sensitive to the opinions of those around her. Her disposition and character, in the moulding of which her father and her brother-in-law had taken so conspicuous a part, had undergone little modification during the seven years of her first marriage. But the Marquis had colored her views of things and people; and, as always, her ideas had been largely influenced by her companions of the moment.

Among these, by far the most important at this time was an Italian named Franchi, who, on the recommendation of Maurice Strakosch, had been engaged by the Marquis de Caux in 1869 to act as her secretary and *homme d'affaires*.[1]

[1] Franchi worked in a somewhat similar capacity for Strakosch in

He had received a good training and proved to be an excellent man for the post. Nicolini, who had previously met Franchi in Paris, had great confidence in him. His services were consequently retained under the new régime, and he remained in Mme. Patti's employ for a period altogether of about fifteen years. It may be mentioned that she did not pay him a salary. He received what was probably more profitable remuneration in the shape of a substantial commission upon her earnings.

In a business sense, the combined influence of Nicolini and Franchi quickly became apparent: first of all in a sensible augmentation of her fees, and later on in a disposition to accept engagements for countries that the famous singer had not visited hitherto. Her terms for Covent Garden had so far remained unaltered. Mr. Gye had paid her £100 a night for several years, and would most likely have continued at that figure until the end, had she not heard that Nilsson was getting £200 a night from Mr. Mapleson. For Patti to accept lower fees than Nilsson was, of course, out of the question. Mr. Gye was obliged not only to spring at one jump to the higher amount, but to exceed it. Her *cachet* was accordingly fixed at two hundred guineas, and from that level it never afterwards rose or fell as long as the Gye management lasted.

But, if her terms for the Continental opera houses went steadily up, it was not at a greater rate than was warranted by the diva's drawing powers. She was invariably a source of substantial profit. Maurice Strakosch observes:[1]

Paris in 1873, when the latter, whom the Ministre des Beaux-Arts had appointed director of the Théâtre-Italien, was engaging his artists. At the end of the season, however, the Minister, finding that Strakosch was unable to carry on the undertaking without loss, withdrew his subvention (100,000 francs), whereupon he resigned his position and resumed work as a teacher and agent.

1 "Souvenirs d'un Impresario."

The trouble is that the *cantatrices* of to-day all reckon themselves Pattis and Nilssons, and regard themselves as their equals, if not for their qualities, at least for the extent of their fees. If Mme. Adelina Patti could sing every evening, there would be no harm in according her an extraordinary sum for each representation, since the director would assuredly find his balance on the right side; and if that director could solve the problem of arranging for Mme. Patti and Mme. Nilsson to sing on alternate nights, his fortune would be made. But when one or other of these artists has to be replaced by singers of inferior class, who ask relatively the same figures for their services, ruin is almost certain.

As will have been seen, it was not Patti but Nilsson who led the way in the demand for higher fees. The former did not follow the example of her Swedish contemporary abroad until she found that foreign operatic managers were willing to pay her more. This they really did, because they knew her to be under all circumstances what Americans call a "money-making proposition"; and it was an indisputable fact, universally admitted, that no European impresario who secured a contract with Patti ever incurred a loss over it. The same record applies to the United States, save in the one or two instances where the enterprise was marred by pure mismanagement.

Obviously, Patti had a perfect right to double or treble her terms if she pleased; and at the instigation of Nicolini and Franchi she did so. But it would be unjust to charge her, on that account, with having inaugurated the era of exorbitant operatic fees. She was not the first great prima donna to command huge salaries, though, as we shall see, she was to break every record in that direction and receive the largest sums ever paid to a singer. It was not her fault if opera singers less gifted and endowed, with inferior earning capacity, also began to raise their terms, and found man-

agers weak enough to accede to their demands. On the other hand, the artistic consequences of the new development were frequently regrettable in the extreme.

Thus, the more the impresario had to pay Mme. Patti, the less he could afford to expend upon the remainder of his troupe; and when the supporting artists were unworthy of association with her, the ensemble suffered in proportion. A well-known contemporary critic referred to the practice in these terms:

> No person of ordinary musical taste can care for an operatic representation in which one singer is as admirable as, under the circumstances, she can be, while the others are quite incompetent. . . . Rachel, Ristori, Sarah Bernhardt, have all been guilty of the fault charged against Mme. Patti, and which in the early part of the century used to be charged against Mme. Catalani. But an artist, however great, who consents to perform in the midst of inadequate supporters ceases to be more than a highly interesting curiosity, or, let us say, phenomenon.[1]

Maurice Strakosch told the writer of the lines just quoted that "When she sang in Vienna at the beginning of 1863 she was receiving one thousand pounds a month." A quarter of a century later she was to receive (in the United States) *one thousand pounds a night!* Midway between these periods Franchi was being instructed to "arrange the contract" with the Continental impresarios at anywhere near 5,000 francs (£200) a performance.

Nicolini always insisted on her being paid her full terms. As a rule, too, besides singing with her himself, he stipulated that a strong supporting company should be provided. In 1878 he persuaded her to accept a liberal offer from Maurice Strakosch to undertake a tour in Italy. It comprised visits to Milan, Genoa, Florence, Rome, and Naples;

[1] "The Prima Donna," by H. Sutherland Edwards, Vol. II, p. 83.

and everywhere there was the same tale of triumphant success. The most remarkable demonstrations occurred at Milan, where Patti and Nicolini appeared together at La Scala in "Aïda" for ten consecutive representations.

Maurice Strakosch in his "Souvenirs" thus comments upon this Italian tour:

> One cannot imagine the enthusiasm that the Italians displayed towards the diva; it sounds more fairylike than real. . . . In the towns which Patti passed through the hotels were crowded to excess; the people from the country round about simply rushed to hear her; they slept literally in the streets and in the public places. However vast the theatres in which she sang, the stage every night was completely strewn with flowers. The price of entrance alone cost 20 francs; it might be impossible to see Patti, but she could be heard from a corridor, and that was enough—the public was delighted. Stalls cost 50 francs and private boxes any price up to 2,000 francs (£80). The average receipts always exceeded 40,000 francs (£1,600). . . . M. Nicolini, whose tenor voice was of beautiful quality, shared with Mme. Patti the applause of the spectators. He had previously left pleasant memories in Italy, and the cordial reception accorded him during this last tour proved that he had not been forgotten.

For a couple of years after this successful Italian venture, Europe continued to satisfy the ambitious cravings of Nicolini and Franchi. Then there slowly loomed upon the horizon the beckoning shadow of another continent, from whose shores at that time artists of distinction were wont to return with exciting reports of fabulous wealth, a fanatical love of music, and profits galore. It did not need a great deal or argument to convince Mme. Patti that she might with advantage revisit the country of her infancy and girlhood. She decided to do so in the late autumn of 1881, at which date she had been away from America rather more than twenty years.

The expedition took the form of a concert tour, and unfortunately it was not, from the American point of view, well organized. The services of a transatlantic manager being dispensed with, there was a decided lack of the "bold advertisement" and sensational trumpet-blowing that usually lend éclat (and consequent profit) to the American visits of artists of international fame. Doubtless it has been expected that the name Patti would alone suffice to "do the trick." But, as it turned out, the new generation of New Yorkers "knew not" Patti. Asked to pay ten dollars a seat to hear her, they politely relinquished that privilege to her old friends and admirers, who did not muster audiences big enough to fill the room. The receipts at the first New York concert amounted to no more than $3,000; at the second to as little as $1,000! Only after the diva had sung on behalf of a charity and cut down the charge for seats to five dollars (reserved) and two dollars (unreserved) did the business begin to improve.

She then placed the direction of affairs in the hands of Mr. Henry E. Abbey, who had earned some repute as American manager for Mme. Sarah Bernhardt. He speedily organized a concert tour in the Eastern States which on the whole prospered fairly well. But New York wanted to hear Patti only in opera. So a few performances, with an exceedingly weak supporting company, were given in February and March, 1882, at the old Wallack's Theatre on Broadway, and with these the ill-starred undertaking came to a conclusion.

Evidently Franchi had not understood American campaigning. However, Mme. Patti was not the woman to be discouraged by that rarest of all her experiences, a quasi-failure, particularly when she knew the cause and perceived the remedy. The latter presented itself on the spot in the burly person of Colonel James Henry Mapleson, who by now

was an established impresario in both hemispheres. His season at the Academy of Music, New York, had been running concurrently with the before-mentioned Patti concerts, and she had in course of her tour sung under his management at the Cincinnati Opera Festival, receiving a very high fee. Moreover, Messrs. Ernest and Herbert Gye (sons of Frederick Gye, and now her Covent Garden directors) were interested at this time in Mapleson's American speculations.

When, therefore, the persuasive Colonel offered Mme. Patti big terms to sing for him at the Academy of Music the following winter, he found a ready listener; and when he further consented to engage Signor Nicolini as principal tenor, all obstacles were removed. The bargain was signed and sealed before they quitted New York.

The new company arrived from England early in the month of October, 1882; and this time a "Patti boom" was engineered in masterly fashion. Mapleson has himself described the reception in his own picturesque language:[1]

> Of course, all the attention of the public was concentrated on the expected arrival of Patti. . . . I had left orders for a telegram to be sent to me as soon as the vessel passed Fire Island, in order that I might be in time to dress and go down to one of the specially chartered steamers with Signor Franchi, Patti's agent, Commander Herbert Gye, and a party of artists and reporters, accompanied by military bands, fireworks, etc. The *Servia* was out in the middle of the stream, and we steamed up alongside, when we saw Patti, who had been up since half-past four in the morning, in feverish anxiety to reach *terra firma*. Our band struck up "God Save the Queen," and everyone bared his head; the Englishmen partly from traditional reverence, but most of those present from admiration of the lyric queen who had come for another reign to the delighted people of New York. . . . In the evening there was a midnight

[1] "The Mapleson Memoirs," London, 1888. Vol. I, p. 289.

AIDA, 1876

serenade in front of the Windsor Hotel, and ultimately *la diva* had to appear at the window, when orchestra and chorus, who were outside, performed the grand prayer from "I Lombardi." After three hearty cheers for Adelina Patti, people went home and she was left in peace. She made her début a few days afterwards in "Lucia di Lammermoor."

Mapleson paid Mme. Patti $4,500 (£900) a performance for the American season of 1882–83, including the services of Signor Nicolini—whenever he sang. Allowing for that stipulation, these were the highest terms she had yet received, albeit not so high that they did not permit the impresario to reap a satisfactory margin of profit. The company was a strong one, the repertory attractive, the public enthusiastic in its response. Although for forty performances she received the (then) record sum of $175,000.

Once, when Patti and Scalchi appeared together in "Semiramide," the receipts at the Academy of Music amounted to $14,000. Elsewhere in the United States, during a prolonged and successful tour, the same figure was also reached when well-worn operas like "Lucia" were given with Patti as the solitary star. She had now not only reconquered America, but achieved fame of a more enduring kind than the evanescent popularity of her girlhood days.

The second season wound up, like the previous one, with an operatic festival at Cincinnati, in the course of which she appeared in "Aïda," "La Traviata," "Semiramide," and "Don Giovanni." The leading singers of Mapleson's troupe further comprised Albani, Fursch-Madi, Valleria, Minnie Hauk, Scalchi, Nicolini, Campanini, Mierzwinsky, Ravelli, Galassi, and Del Puente, with Arditi as conductor-in-chief. Before leaving for England Mme. Patti again signed with the same manager for the following season. But the conditions were by then to have undergone a considerable change.

In 1883 the old Academy of Music in New York was for the first time faced with opposition from the newly erected Metropolitan Opera House. The primary purpose of the latter was presumably to furnish a handsome and more commodious opera house for the display of New York society in all its wealth of finery and jewels and luxurious extravagance. The Gyes of Covent Garden had struggled in vain to secure the control and management of the new establishment. Mr. Vanderbilt and his co-stockholders were anxious for it to be directed by an American manager, and incidentally to prove, if necessary, that New York was quite capable of supporting two opera houses.

At the same time, they were desirous of securing Mme. Patti for their opening season, and, having appointed Mr. Henry Abbey manager of the Metropolitan, they made strenuous efforts through him to lure her from the Maplesonian fold. In this they did not succeed, although Mr. Abbey's offer of $5,000 a night for her services compelled the Colonel ultimately to advance to that figure before the diva would consent to bind herself to him afresh.

Mr. Abbey contrived, nevertheless, to carry off several of the artists who had previously sung at the Academy of Music; so that, with Christine Nilsson for his *prima donna assoluta* and a brilliant débutante in Mme. Marcella Sembrich, the Metropolitan possessed a strong company. Both managers, indeed, were in the position to wage a tremendous warfare; and wage it they did. They opened on the same evening (October 22, 1883), and fought their campaign steadily until Christmas. Resuming in the early spring, they went on until Easter, and by the time the struggle ended each side had sustained ruinous losses. According to Mr. John B. Schoeffel (Mr. Abbey's partner), the deficit at the Metropolitan amounted to nearly $600,000.[1] Mr. Abbey then threw up

[1] "Chapters of Opera," by H. E. Krehbiel.

the sponge and resigned the direction of the Metropolitan, which remained shut until the autumn of 1884.

Colonel Mapleson lost heavily, as has been said; yet less severely than his opponent, and thus was able to continue the fight for two more seasons. For this he had to thank Mme. Patti, who, in spite of her fee of $5,000 a performance, "payable in advance," drew sufficiently crowded houses to be his main source of profit. She had made her *rentrée* in Rossini's "La Gazza Ladra," which had not been heard in New York for many years. Otherwise her repertory for the season contained nothing fresh until her return visit to the Empire City in the spring of 1884, when she appeared with Signor Nicolini in the Italian version of Gounod's "Roméo et Juliette" for the first time in America.

It was during the provincial tour that followed the New York winter season of 1883 that Mme. Patti's manager found it hardest to make ends meet. To make sure of her *cachet*, she had to insist upon the fulfilment of the clause in her contract requiring the money to be paid to her agent before each performance began. Mapleson himself relates in his "Memoirs" an amusing story of what happened in Philadelphia on the night when she was to sing in "La Traviata." If not accurate in every detail, at least it shows in a favorable light the Colonel's (and Signor Franchi's) sense of humor.[1]

In the same pages there is a vivid account of many other adventures in which Mme. Patti was concerned during the progress of this American tour. Most of them appear to have been the outcome of an acute rivalry between herself and the gifted Hungarian soprano, Etelka Gerster, who was unwise enough to consider that she ought not to play "second fiddle" to any other living singer—not even Adelina Patti.

[1] See Appendix T.

The intrigues and quarrels that occurred *en route* provided Mapleson with constant excitement and—much material for his book. They seem to have culminated at San Francisco, where, however, a timely earthquake brought everybody to their senses. Says Arditi: "Words fail me to give an adequate description of the sensation caused there by Patti and Gerster." Nevertheless, although their manager announced them to appear together as *Valentina* and the *Queen* in "Les Huguenots" they steadfastly declined to do so.[1]

On their way to California the company paid a visit to Salt Lake City. There the "little lady" made great friends with the Mormon Prophet, Brigham Young, and, accompanied by some of his apostles, he partook of a *déjeuner* in her private car, which stood, as usual, in a siding at the railway station. He requited her hospitality by allowing her to sing at an afternoon concert in the vast Mormon Tabernacle, which until then had never been utilized for any but religious services. The prices were fixed at a low figure (two dollars and a dollar), and the huge place was packed. Brigham Young was so delighted that he subsequently attended a performance of "Lucia" in which Patti sang at the Salt Lake Theatre on the same evening.

Still, nothing in the course of the whole tour could compare with the scenes enacted at San Francisco. There the

[1] This was in consequence of what had happened at Chicago earlier in the tour. There they actually did sing together in Meyerbeer's opera, but, through a mistake on the part of the ushers, an enormous collection of floral tributes, which should have been handed to Mme. Patti at the end of the third and fourth acts, were carefully presented to her at the close of the first, where *Valentina* has practically nothing to sing and the honors were all Mme. Gerster's. The diva was much upset by the *contretemps*, for which she was in no way responsible; but, under the conditions, no sort of assurance would have explained it away, nor could the two singers ever after be persuaded to appear together in the same opera.

ERNEST NICOLINI, 1887

"Adelina Patti epidemic," as Mapleson called it, developed from a fever into a condition of delirium that attacked the whole population of the city, and lasted, despite the occurrence of the aforesaid earthquake, until the end of the visit.

The excitement began with the preliminary sale of tickets for the Patti representations. The crowds stood in line during the whole of the night, and many sold their places next morning at from ten to twenty dollars apiece. Speculators obtained fabulous prices for seats. Thousands of people were unable to obtain admission at the opening performance; moreover, a fraudulent issue of bogus tickets led to overcrowding and serious trouble inside the opera house just as the curtain was rising on "La Traviata." Next day the police intervened, and Mapleson was charged before the district magistrate with violating the city ordinance regulating the obstruction of passageways in theatres. He was convicted and fined $75; which, however, the impresario declares that the judge, "evidently a lover of music, consented to take out in opera tickets."

The reception accorded to the great prima donna when she appeared as *Violetta* was marked by indescribable enthusiasm. The rush to hear her on subsequent nights was such that the stay of the company had to be extended an extra week. Altogether the Californian receipts must have helped in a considerable measure to reduce the total losses on the New York season, which, on being resumed after the close of the tour, proved no less disastrous than before.

Yet, in spite of Mapleson's evil fortune, Mme. Patti signed another contract with him for the season of 1884-85. He had paid her regularly, and in the course of the two preceding tours she received from him a total sum falling not far short of £90,000, then nearly half a million dollars. She was aware, moreover, that he was again to be backed by the

stockholders of the Academy of Music—a very important security. Owing to these elements of strength, certain efforts now made by the stockholders of the Metropolitan Opera House to win Mapleson over to their establishment proved a failure. Poor Henry Abbey was too near ruin to take up the reins again; and, although the Gyes entered into further negotiations, their attempts to gain a footing in New York were consistently doomed to failure. For a time it really seemed as if there would be no opposition to the season at the Academy.

On Mme. Patti's arrival in New York late in October, 1884, she learned of the recent death of her old companion, Signor Brignoli, who it will be remembered, had sung *Edgardo* on the occasion of her operatic début in "Lucia" in 1859. Knowing that he had been in embarrassed pecuniary circumstances, she at once offered to defray the funeral expenses; but this had already been done by another friend. She was met, as usual, at quarantine by a steamer with the Colonel and a military band on board. The newspaper reporters were received on her behalf by her new secretary and manager, Mr. Charles Levilly, an Englishman of French descent, who, a few weeks before, had succeeded the diplomatic Signor Franchi.

The official prospectus inaugurated a new form of Maplesonian joke—one that was destined to become classical. It declared this to be Mme. Patti's "farewell season in America." As we shall see, it proved to be a premature announcement. Happily, no one appears to have taken it seriously. For the time being, however, it was not contradicted, and, indeed, when the reporters put the question to the prima donna herself, she replied:

"This is the last time I shall come to America, as the physical discomfort of crossing the ocean is too great for me to be repeatedly subjecting myself to it."

Other great artists have probably said the same thing just after passing Sandy Hook at the end of a disagreeable voyage. It would have been as well, all the same, had the word "farewell" not been uttered in connection with Mme. Patti for another fifteen or twenty years.

The season began early in November, Mme. Patti making her reappearance as *Rosina* in "Il Barbiere." On the 17th of the same month the Metropolitan opened its doors with German opera, now exploited for the first time in New York with a completely organized company of German artists. The venture was under the direction (managerial as well as artistic) of Dr. Leopold Damrosch, a talented conductor hailing from Breslau, who had already lived twelve years in America. The troupe included some of the better-known Wagnerian singers—notably Materna and Marianne Brandt—then popular at Bayreuth and elsewhere. The performances were for the most part excellent, and fulfilled a want that New York, with its large Teutonic element, had long felt.

The remarkable success of the new enterprise had an immediate effect upon the receipts at the older house. It became increasingly evident that New York was losing its taste for Italian opera of the old school. Not even the magic name of Patti was capable of saving the unfortunate Colonel Mapleson from renewed financial disaster. At the critical moment the stockholders withdrew their support, and the season ended in December, says Mr. Krehbiel, "with ruin staring the impresario in the face." Still, the tour that followed helped him somewhat to recoup his losses. It had its golden moments, especially at San Francisco and Chicago; above all whenever Patti and Scalchi appeared together in "Semiramide," "Linda di Chamouni," "Martha," or "Aïda."

One interesting incident of this unsatisfactory New York season remains to be narrated, namely, the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Patti's first appearance in opera at the Academy of Music, on November 24, 1859. Mapleson had first arranged to give an anniversary performance of the same opera ("Lucia") with the same tenor, Brignoli, in the part of *Edgardo;* but the death of that artist a few days before the date compelled an alteration in the programme. "Martha" was therefore substituted, with Scalchi, Nicolini, and De Anna in the other leading parts; and an unusually brilliant audience assembled to do honor to the occasion. At the close there was a demonstration upon the stage, Patti appearing in the midst of a vast floral display with a huge American eagle for its central feature. A military band played a march, and the house cheered frantically for twenty minutes by the clock.

Mapleson has related with much gusto in his "Memoirs" how the diva was subsequently escorted to her hotel, in "a carriage with four milk-white steeds," by a procession of torch-bearers and mounted police, followed by a wagon from which men were burning colored fires and letting off fireworks. All of this, in addition to an orchestral serenade under her hotel windows, was organized by the wily Colonel himself, who, according to his own account, was "to have taken command of the troops as brigadier. My horse, however, never reached me. It was found impossible to get it through the crowd. This did not prevent the illustrated papers from representing me on horseback, and in a highly military attitude."

On the other hand, Mr. Krehbiel in his "Chapters of Opera" chronicles the whole episode with undisguised contempt. He declares that the "milk-white steeds" were unharnessed and the carriage dragged through the streets to the hotel amid wild rejoicings—all as prearranged by the

Colonel, who, however, fails to mention the circumstance. Mr. Krehbiel assures us that "Colonel Mapleson had resolved that the scene should be enacted." He adds:

To make sure of such a spontaneous ovation in staid New York was a question which Mapleson solved by hiring fifty or more Italians [choristers, probably] from the familiar haunts in Third Avenue, and providing them with torches, to follow the carriage, which was prosaically dragged along to its destination at the Windsor Hotel. As a demonstration it was the most pitiful affair that I ever witnessed.

This impression it was, no doubt, that inspired Mr. Krehbiel to set about arranging a celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary in a fashion rather more after his own heart. It did not, for certain reasons, assume quite the form that he intended. Nevertheless, a banquet took place—a "stag party," as they call it in America—at which some seventy gentlemen acted as hosts, and the Colonel made his appearance "in the glory of that flawless, speechless dress suit, with the inevitable rose in the lapel of his coat. Not a glance did he give to right or left, but with the grace of a practised courtier he sailed across the room, sank on his knees before the diva, and raised her hand to his lips. Such a smile as rewarded him!"

After the banquet, speeches were made by William Steinway, William Winter, Dr. Damrosch, and other notable men, including doubtless Mr. Krehbiel himself; for beyond question the able critic was at that time a genuine and fervent admirer of Patti.[1] But the real hero of the occasion was her oldest American manager, Max Maretzek, who told stories about her early life and career. Says Mr. Krehbiel:

Amongst other things, he illustrated how early the divine Adelina had fallen into the ways of a prima donna by refusing to sing at

[1] See Appendix U.

a concert in Tripler Hall unless he, who was managing the concert, would first go out and buy her a pound of candy. He agreed to get the sweetmeats, provided she would give him a kiss in return. In possession of her box, she kept both the provisions of her contract. When the toastmaster [*i.e.*, the chairman of the banquet] declared the meeting adjourned, Patti bore straight down on her old manager and said:

"Max, if I gave you a kiss for a box of candy then, I'll give you one for nothing now!"

And she did.[1]

After paying return visits to New York and Boston, the Mapleson company sailed for England on May 2, and on their arrival Mme. Patti and Signor Nicolini travelled, as usual, direct to Craig-y-Nos Castle.

Exactly how Colonel Mapleson stood financially at the end of this venture it would be hard to state with accuracy. According to his own account, it had netted him £30,000. He congratulates himself on having severed his connection with the "Royal Italian Opera Company, Limited" (then in liquidation), as otherwise "I should have been obliged to hand them £15,000, being half the net profit of this last American tour." Very different, however, is the version given by Mr. Krehbiel, who declares that Mapleson had contrived (surprising fact!) to finish up the season owing five or six thousand dollars to Mme. Patti, and instituted a suit at law in New York against Nicolini "to recover ten thousand dollars for failing to sing." One bill, of course, would have comfortably offset the other. But, as we shall perceive, the sequel does not indicate the existence of any serious break between the parties. "A fallacy somewhere!" as W. S. Gilbert observes in "Ruddigore."

The probabilities are that Mapleson grossly exaggerated the total of his profits in order to aim a shaft at the Gyes,

[1] "Chapters of Opera," pp. 72–74.

with whom he had quarrelled, and who had now been compelled to terminate the long family reign at Covent Garden for lack of capital to carry on the concern. Indeed, a merely cursory perusal of the "Mapleson Memoirs" will suffice to convince the reader that their author regarded accurate facts as of much smaller importance than proving his own case or hitting out at persons whom he owed a grudge. His treatment of Mme. Patti in this respect was not always fair. She figures largely in the story of his career. He "exploited" her in America to their mutual advantage. It is evident that he admired her immensely, and that he was proud of his association with the great artist.

At the same time, his numerous innuendoes and doubtful anecdotes make it clear that there was generally an *arrière pensée*. He could never quite forgive her for having brushed him aside, when she first came to London, to ally herself with Frederick Gye at Covent Garden.[1] Furthermore, loudly as he boasted of paying her £1,000 a night in the United States, he never thoroughly relished a proceeding that made such a serious inroad upon the huge stacks of dollar notes and gold eagles which it was his joy to see pouring into the box-office.

On one point Mapleson had a possible grievance, and it is of sufficient interest to warrant mention here. His contracts with Mme. Patti contained a clause liberating her from all liability to attend rehearsals:

> During the three or four years that Mme. Patti was with me in America [he says] she never once appeared at a rehearsal. When I was producing "La Gazza Ladra," an opera which contains an unusually large number of parts, there were several members of the cast who did not even know Mme. Patti by sight. Under such

[1] Yet Mapleson knew perfectly well that the blame for this diplomatic move was due, not to the youthful Adelina, but to her brother-in-law, Maurice Strakosch.

circumstances all idea of a perfect ensemble was, of course, out of the question. It was only on the night of performance, and in presence of the public, that the concerted pieces were tried for the first time with the soprano voice.

This non-attendance at rehearsals was, as has already been related, part of a plan originated by Maurice Strakosch for sparing his sister-in-law the "wear and tear" of what is perhaps the most fatiguing duty that a prima donna has to undergo. At that more juvenile period of her career it was unquestionably a wise precaution. It became a fixed custom, and, save in the case of final rehearsals of a new opera, Mme. Patti was seldom known to depart from it.

There is, however, the good excuse that the round of characters in which the public demanded to hear her on her long tours in America were familiar and comparatively limited. This necessitated constantly going over the same ground. Imagine, therefore, the amount of physical labor that would have been added to the total strain of her long stage career if, among her other indulgences, she had not been relieved from the hard work of rehearsing hackneyed rôles at every opera house she sang at!

CHAPTER XV

Decay of the Gye Régime—Mapleson Attempts a Covent Garden Season (1885)—He Secures Patti; Also the Bond Street Libraries—The Diva's Contract and Her Colds—The Author Is Introduced—His First Interview with Patti and Nicolini—Her "Carmen" Secret Comes Out—An Ambition that Involves a Failure—The Assumption of Bizet's Heroine Analyzed—The Twenty-fifth Covent Garden Anniversary—Craig-y-Nos Castle and Its Host and Hostess in the Eighties—Start of the Patti Concerts at the Albert Hall—"Home, sweet home"—Abbey Devises a "Farewell" Tour in America—The Question of Patti's Farewells—She Tries "Carmen" at New York—Her One and Only Appearance at Her Majesty's Theatre—Death of Maurice Strakosch

DURING the intervals between the visits to America recorded in the last chapter Mme. Patti punctually appeared at Covent Garden every summer. But there the old order was changing. The managerial talents of Frederick Gye had not been inherited by his successors, and the fortunes of the Royal Italian Opera were slowly but surely on the wane.

Each year the subscription grew smaller; each year one noted a deterioration in that atmosphere of stately pomp and stiff exclusiveness that had so long been the peculiar social appanage of the Covent Garden season. The history of the house in the early eighties furnishes some melancholy chapters of decaying grandeur, of diminishing artistic effort and public support. The affairs of the limited liability company which had carried on the undertaking after the death of the old impresario went from bad to worse; and with the close of the season of 1884 the régime of the Gyes had passed for ever.

The share taken by Mme. Patti in these concluding seasons

does not call for comment. Such new rôles as she sang during the period they covered were unimportant; they have, indeed, been already enumerated in these pages, among the limited group of characters actually created by her in course of her uninterrupted series of annual appearances at Covent Garden from 1861 till 1884.

The season of 1885, in which she was also to take part, boasted more noteworthy features. It had been fully expected that there would be no opera at Covent Garden that year. The house had been closed for some months, and down to the middle of May no sign was forthcoming that it would reopen. Society seemed not to care a jot. There was neither bitterness in Belgravia nor mourning in Mayfair. English opera was at that moment flourishing anew, under Carl Rosa. Italian opera was "going to the dogs," and not a hand, apparently, was being raised to save it, when an extraordinary thing happened. There was a sudden cry of "Mapleson to the rescue!"

It was like a bolt from the blue. Back from America, with —according to his own account—a few thousand dollars in his pocket, and certainly no one in the field against him, the doughty Colonel had seized opportunity by the forelock: he had secured Covent Garden for the last five weeks of the London season. To perform what? he hardly knew; Italian opera of some sort, of course. The "class" would have to depend upon the support, and in that direction things could not have looked more unpromising. Society was out of sorts. The Queen might not even subscribe for the Royal box which she never used. The Prince of Wales loved opera, but was not yet making a hobby of it. Aristocratic patrons, except a few of the old guard from Her Majesty's Theatre, would probably keep severely away. There remained the "libraries."

Accordingly, Colonel Mapleson marched up and down Bond Street and canvassed the "trade." But the trade steadfastly

refused to come in. What inducement, they asked, was there to guarantee a season at Covent Garden when the public was sick and tired of Italian opera and there was no prospect of a "star" who could attract them? Mapleson's announcement that he had taken the house had not evoked inquiry for a single stall. Then he disappeared from the metropolis, and not even his closest friends knew whither he had journeyed.

The silence that ensued lasted about a week,—the third week in May or thereabouts,—and it was fast deepening into mystery when the impresario suddenly reappeared in town. This time he did not "march"—he took a hansom direct to Mitchell's, and Bubb's, and Lacon and Ollier's, and Keith, Prowse's; and he flourished before their wondering gaze a document that made them dance to a very different tune.

What was it that moved them to say, "We will 'come in' with pleasure"? Nothing more or less than a newly signed contract with Patti for "a series of eight operatic representations in Italian, or, failing these, high-class concerts, to be given under his direction from the 16th of June to the 16th of July," at a fee of £500 a representation or concert. There it was in black and white; there could be no mistake about it. It meant at least five weeks of opera at Covent Garden with the diva at the head of the company.

Yet they could scarcely believe their eyes. For had not the liveliest stories come from New York of quarrels and litigation between Nicolini and Mapleson, of *cachets* unpaid and general disagreement? All of these the Colonel now dismissed as groundless and absurd. "Otherwise," said he, "how could I have been down to Craig-y-Nos Castle and received there as an honored guest, or have persuaded Mme. Patti to sign her first London engagement with me?"[1] If

[1] This was literally true. Colonel Mapleson always declared that, so far as Europe was concerned, he was the man who "discovered" Patti. Be that as it may, their American relations notwithstanding, she had

obstacles had really stood in the way, the astute impresario had unquestionably overcome them, and that was enough for the libraries.

Within twenty-four hours the projected season was made known to the public in a brief announcement, which stated that Covent Garden would reopen on June 16, and that Mme. Patti would appear on the inaugural night. Mapleson then set to work to collect and reinforce his company, the majority of whom had remained in London after their return from New York in the middle of May. He also conveyed to the press a sly hint that the principal novelty of the season would be "Mme. Patti in a new character." What that character was to be he did not reveal until a few days later; then

sung in London twenty-four years before she entered into a contract to sing there, either in opera or concert, under his management. He was particularly proud of this contract— so proud that he printed it in his "Memoirs," and there made it the text for a lengthy sermon upon the unfair, tyrannical conditions imposed upon operatic managers by distinguished prima donnas. Years afterwards, by a curious chance, the original document, bearing the simple signature "Adelina Patti," came into the possession of the author of this book.

It certainly contained some clauses—concocted, doubtless, by MM. Nicolini and Levilly—which had never figured in her contracts with Mr. Gye or even with her French and Russian managers. For instance, one stipulated that the diva's name should appear on all posters "*in a separate line of large letters . . . at least one third larger than those employed for the announcement of any other artiste.*" Another provided that "*in the event of an epidemic of cholera, smallpox, fever, or other contagious deadly disease, Mme. Patti shall be at liberty to cancel this engagement.*" Then there was the clause about rehearsals, to which allusion has already been made. To this and to the one relating to the size of the letters Mapleson had been accustomed in America; for he tells a story in his "Memoirs" of how during the Chicago Festival he "saw Signor Nicolini, armed with what appeared to be a theodolite, looking intently and with a scientific air at some wall posters on which the letters composing Mme. Patti's name seemed to him not quite one third larger" than those of some other "artiste." To make sure, however, "he procured a ladder, and, boldly mounting the steps, ascertained by means of a foot-rule" that his eyes and the theodolite had not deceived him. Naturally, a vigorous protest was the result, and the discrepancy was duly corrected.

he gave what proved to be a rather surprising piece of information, namely, that the diva intended to sing, for the first time, the part of *Carmen!*

But alas for the vanity of human hopes and anticipations! She caught a couple of colds in quick succession that upset all Mapleson's arrangements, the first compelling him to postpone his opening for nearly a week.[1] Then her essay as *Carmen* was to culminate in the one decisive disappointment of her career: an artistic failure! But, before dealing therewith, the writer craves leave to make a short digression for the purpose of recording his first interview with Mme. Patti, which occurred upon the day preceding her début in Bizet's opera.

By the summer of 1885 thirteen years had passed since, as a youth, I first heard Patti. During the latter half of that period I had been slowly climbing the ladder as musical critic of the *Sunday Times* and other papers. I had long cherished a desire to know the most celebrated singer of our time, but somehow—the fact is not altogether easy to explain —I had never sought to gratify my wish, even when it would have been comparatively easy to do so.

My reticence had nothing in common, most assuredly, with

[1] In his "Memoirs" Mapleson rather unjustly blames Nicolini for this catastrophe, which he declares cost him a thousand pounds. He attributes it to the husband's parsimony in not bringing his wife to London until the day before, in order to save hotel expenses, "or from some uncontrollable desire to catch an extra salmon." Why she should have caught cold driving to the station on that account is not altogether clear, particularly when we remember that it was the month of June and that Mme. Patti was accustomed to driving in the Welsh mountains every day in all winds and weathers. Besides, it was her general custom, when she had to go direct from home to sing in London, not to leave until the day before. The impresario's loss of temper is, however, easy to understand; and it was doubtless accentuated by the second cold, which she caught in London after the season had started.

narrow views regarding the relations—and intervening distances—that should be preserved between artist and critic. (I have never shared those views, never having felt that friendship ought to interfere with the candid expression of one's professional opinion. Musicians are proverbially supersensitive; but if they cannot suffer honest adverse criticism, so much the worse for them.) Still less will it be imagined that such considerations could arise in the case of this illustrious exponent of her art, whose efforts, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, were entirely beyond criticism.

The true reason, I think, was a purely sentimental one, having its root in the intensity of the admiration—profound, unqualified, sincere—that I had always felt for Mme. Patti. She represented to my mind the perfect ideal of what a singer should be. The world had placed her upon a lofty pedestal apart from all others, and was content to worship its goddess from afar. Ought not I to do likewise? I had asked myself the question again and again; and so far I had resisted the temptation to answer it other than in the affirmative.

But one day—it must have been towards the end of May, 1885—a brother journalist, who was one of her intimate friends, surprised me by telling me point-blank that the first time Mme. Patti came to London again he meant to introduce me to her. I asked what had made him think of doing so.

"Simply," he answered, "because Mme. Patti, when your name was mentioned a short time ago, expressed a wish to know you; and a wish from that quarter, like one from royalty, is equal to a command."

I acknowledged it might be so, and did not disguise the fact that I was delighted. At the same time, I explained as well as I could the peculiar hesitancy, the almost shy feeling, that

had deterred me from seeking to make the personal acquaintance of the great artist.

"You need not hesitate," was my friend's reply. "She is very wonderful in that respect. Like the Queen of England, she makes you feel perfectly at your ease in her presence, without losing an iota of her sense of dignity. Yet, such is her charm, her natural simplicity, her magnetic power, above all, her sustained vivacity and spirit, that you never for a moment cease to realize that the Patti of the drawing-room is the Patti of the stage—and of your dreams!"

A few days later I was to judge for myself how true this was.

In spite of the postponement, Mr. Mapleson's season opened brilliantly enough with "La Traviata," and Mme. Patti had shaken off the effects of her cold sufficiently to do herself full justice in what was at this time her favorite rôle. She was to have sung *Lucia* next, but had unluckily to disappoint her audience at the last moment, owing to an attack of "hay fever."[1] It was too late to change the opera, and the part of the heroine was sung by a Swedish débutante, Mlle. Alma Fohström, who made a favorable impression and afterward achieved some popularity. A day or two after, I accompanied my journalistic friend to the Midland Grand Hotel, by appointment, to pay Mme. Patti and Signor Nicolini an afternoon visit.

When we were ushered into the large, lofty apartment that they used as a *salon* with its gaunt Gothic windows facing the

[1] Mapleson, by the way, has not made Nicolini responsible for this second indisposition. Probably he could not find a colorable excuse for doing so. And yet, no one knew better than the Colonel that Nicolini (despite his selfishness and his passion for angling) was more interested than any one else to keep Mme. Patti well and in fit condition to fulfil her engagements.

Euston Road (they never, I think, stayed there except during this one season), Mme. Patti came forward and greeted us with much cordiality. I had already met Nicolini, and it was he who formally presented me to the famous "little lady." Her bright smile and gracious manner instantly put me at my ease. She bade me sit beside her, and began to talk—in those deep, rich contralto tones that always belied so curiously the brighter timbre of her singing voice.

She looked astonishingly young. Though in her forty-third year, she did not appear to be a day more than thirty, and her movements seemed still to retain the impulse and freedom of girlhood. The merry laugh, the rapid turn of the head, the mischievous twinkle in the keen dark eyes when she said something humorous, were as natural to her as that rapid, forward *élan* when she extended her hand to *Alfredo* in the supper scene of "Traviata." I could now see that my colleague had spoken truly. The Patti of the stage and the Patti of real life were, in outward semblance and deportment, one and the same. It followed, therefore, that the woman was as unaffected, as fascinating, as the artist.

She began:

"I must tell you that I rarely look at a newspaper, and I read very few notices of the opera. But I generally know what is written about me, and by whom. Some of the things you have said have given me a great deal of pleasure. I thought you were much older, though; how long have you been a critic?" I told her seven or eight years, but that I had heard her long before I began to write. Her gay laugh echoed through the room.

"What, a critic in your school days? Then I must have formed part of your musical education. Well, at least you can say that you started off with the old Italian school. There is none like it." Which remark led me to mention that

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I had studied some time under Manuel Garcia. On hearing his name she evinced the liveliest interest.

"He must be a wonderful teacher. I am sorry to say I have never met him. *Mais,*"—turning to Nicolini—"*figure-toi,* Ernest, *le maître de* Jenny Lind *est encore vivant!* And still teaching in London, *c'est merveilleux!*" Then, addressing me again: "Do you think he ever heard me?"

"I know he has heard you," was my reply. "I remember his saying once that he admired your *Rosina* immensely. In fact, he declared that yours was the only one he had cared for since his own sister, Malibran, whose great part it was."

"He said that? *Mais comme c'est gentil, n'est ce pas,* Ernest? Do you know, Rossini himself once said the same thing to me. Therefore it must be true." And she laughed again. "But, seriously, I shall enjoy singing the 'Barbiere' more than ever now, and it is one of the parts I love most. Which is my actual favorite? To be frank with you, I don't know. I am so often asked the question that I generally answer one or the other,—*Rosina, Zerlina, Violetta,*—as I feel at the moment. But in reality I cannot make a definite choice. I love each of my characters in turn as I sing it." Then, after a pause, she added: "And maybe I shall like my next one best."

As she spoke she turned to a corner of the room where, hanging on a chair, there lay a dainty Spanish skirt of yellow satin, with a crimson shawl flung carelessly across it.

"*Carmen!*" I murmured.

An eager, sparkling glance shot from her eyes as she echoed the name.

"Yes, *Carmen!* I have been longing to sing it for years, and I am going to do so at last. I adore the opera. Ah, poor Bizet, how I wish he were still alive to hear me! I love the story, I love the music, I love the Spanish scenes and types;

enfin, j'aime tout ce qui est Carmen! You will see me dance; you will hear how I play the castanets. I have never longed so impatiently for anything in my life."

"*Mais, ma mignonne, tu parles trop fort et tu causes trop. Il faut soigner un peu ta voix, n'est-ce pas?*" It was the watchful Nicolini who interrupted,—ever on the lookout to check such moments of girlish excitement and self-forgetfulness. It was true that her voice had gradually increased to a *forte.*

"*Mon cher, tu as raison.*" And she rose. It was the signal for us to depart. "We shall hope to see you before we return to Craig-y-Nos. You must visit us there sometime. *Je suis enchantée d'avoir fait votre connaissance, et je lirai votre article sur 'Carmen.' Au revoir!*"

She held out her hand with a regal gesture that seemed quite natural, nay, inborn; and, just as naturally, albeit the custom was not English, I took the hand and kissed it. Then Nicolini, *en grand seigneur,* came to the door and bowed us out.

"You see," said my friend as we walked downstairs, "she is expecting a great triumph as *Carmen.*" And he added, *sotto voce,* "I wonder!" A few hours later neither of us wondered. I only know that I paid no more visits to Mme. Patti that season, nor did I converse with her again until two years later, when she was in a box one night at Drury Lane, during Sir Augustus Harris's first Italian season.

The character of *Carmen* belongs wholly neither to comedy nor to tragedy. As far as the stage is concerned, she is of the realistic type that one finds only in sheer melodrama. A creature of every-day Spanish life, she requires, as drawn by the master hand of Prosper Mérimée, those graphic touches of realism that reveal the true woman of the people, passionate in her ardor, crude in her coquetry, unblushing in her

sensualism, merciless in her infidelities, reckless in her defiance of fatalistic warnings and physical danger. These were traits readily depicted by a Galli-Marié, a Pauline Lucca, a Minnie Hauk, and later on by a Calvé or a Zélie de Lussan. But they made no sort of appeal to an artist with the temperament of Adelina Patti, who had been reared in opera of the classical schools. Her personality could express a vivacious nature with distinction and grace, but was never fitted for the embodiment of a commonplace woman of the people.

In a word, her *Carmen* proved to be clever but colorless. It was a skilful *tour de force*, nothing more. That she should have even got through her task with credit showed clearly what an advance she had made in the technique of the actress's art. Her rare gift of "pantomime," soon to develop to remarkable heights, stood her in good stead; but nothing could metamorphose the *grande cantatrice* into a *Carmen*. To the regret of an assemblage of her admirers that filled Covent Garden from floor to ceiling, the representation fell painfully flat.

The charm of the incomparable voice and much beautiful singing could not ward off this penalty, for the simple reason that most of the music lay too low for her. A pure soprano is very seldom heard to advantage in a part that has been written for a mezzo-soprano; and in 1885 Mme. Patti had not developed her lower medium and chest tones to the degree of fulness that became noticeable in later years. She elected to raise the *tessitura* of *Carmen's* music by making numerous changes and introducing "ornaments" which were out of keeping with the design of the composer. This naturally aroused adverse criticism; indeed, the press notices as a whole were frankly unfavorable.[1] The performance at Covent Garden was repeated once, but that was all.

[1] See Appendix V.

Joseph Bennett, reverting to Mme. Patti's *Carmen* twenty-one years later (on the occasion of her final "farewell" at the Albert Hall), remarked in the *Daily Telegraph* that the Spanish gipsy was

> A character part demanding a temperament not hers, and one, moreover, which demanded an actress rather than a singer. It is likely that the artist had some doubts as to the result of this venture, but it was necessary for her to take it up in order to share in the applause which the public were eager to bestow upon every representative of a character in part repellent, yet altogether fascinating. In her embodiment of the heroine Mme. Patti, with singular good judgment, elected to rely more upon the fatalism in the gipsy's nature than upon more demonstrative traits. I remember being struck with the intensity of the impression she made in the card scene and in the final situation. So far, good; but Mme. Patti's *Carmen,* with all its merits, failed to hold the public securely, and the artist did not persevere.

This was, on the whole, a just criticism, though I do not agree that it was "necessary" for the artist to attempt a part that did not suit her, least of all for the sake of applause—a stimulus whereof, throughout her life, she was vouchsafed a superabundance.

By the way, the supporting cast of "Carmen" in this instance included Signor del Puente as the *Toreador,* M. Engel as *Don José,* and Mme. Dotti as *Micaela.*

It is a curious fact that neither Mapleson in his "Memoirs" nor Arditi in his "Reminiscences" (the popular "Luigi" was the conductor of this odd season) makes the smallest allusion to Patti's *Carmen.* Yet both of them call attention to her frequent disappointment of the public in consequence of indisposition; and both give picturesque accounts of the celebration, held on the last night of the season, in honor of her twenty-fifth annual engagement at the Royal Italian Opera.

The omission might perhaps be susceptible of explanation—if explanation were needed.

The celebration just referred to was, on the whole, a more successful function than that "engineered" by the same impresario in New York a few months earlier. It wound up with the now customary torchlight procession, upon which the Colonel appeared to set such store; but here it aroused a much more spontaneous response from the public. It also began with far more dignified proceedings in the interior of the opera house.[1] The latter included the presentation to Mme. Patti of an address of congratulation and the gift of a diamond bracelet subscribed for by a large and representative "Testimonial Committee." This ceremony took place after the termination of a performance of "Il Trovatore," which was distinguished by the most magnificent rendering of the part of *Leonora* that I can recall among my personal memories of this supreme artist.

Patti was still to appear at Covent Garden a few times more, though at intervals only. Her career as a concert artist was to be prolonged for another twenty years. But this particular night was practically the last in the history of her unbroken quarter of a century's work—unique, brilliant, amazing in every sense—as the unchallenged and unapproachable star of London's leading opera house. Few could have guessed that it marked the close of a great era in the story of opera in Great Britain. Still fewer could have foretold the interregnum and the renascence that were shortly to occur in turn. Be it said, however, that, as far as Adelina Patti was concerned, "the finish crowned the work."

She now took a well-earned holiday. For several months she did not leave her charming Welsh retreat, and all endeavors to persuade her to undertake another American tour proved, for the time being, fruitless. She had lost confi-

[1] See Appendix W.

dence in Mapleson as a transatlantic manager; and it was perhaps fortunate that she had, since his season at the New York Academy of Music in the winter of 1885–86 turned out the most disastrous of the series, and the tour terminated with a declaration of bankruptcy. Mapleson never took an opera company to America again.

More than a year slipped by. Early in the summer of 1886 occurred the wedding functions in South Wales, already briefly recorded at the close of a previous chapter. Many guests were invited to make a stay at Craig-y-Nos Castle, which had undergone considerable alteration and enlargement, though not to the extent that was to culminate five years later in the addition of a new wing and a private theatre. Of that there will be more to say anon. In the meanwhile the tranquillity and restfulness of these early days at Craig-y-Nos were thoroughly appreciated by the hard-working prima donna, who now probably knew the joys of the *dolce far niente,* coupled with true marital happiness, for the first time in her busy lifetime.

Originally the mansion facing the "Rock of the Night" on the road from Brecon to Ystradgynlais had afforded somewhat limited accommodation. Beautifully situated half-way down the broad northern slope of the Swansea Valley, its ample grounds extending for several acres along the banks of a swift trout stream, it constituted a delightful home for a small family in search of railroad inaccessibility and seclusion from the world. It had been purchased on the advice of Sir Hussey Vivian, M.P. (afterward Lord Swansea) and his brother, Mr. Graham Vivian, with whom Mme. Patti and Signor Nicolini stayed when they originally visited the neighborhood.[1] The fishing was not its smallest attraction in the

[1] They also resided for a short time at Waterton Hall, near Bridgend, and at Cadoxton Hall, Neath, the old home of Mrs. Henry M. Stanley.

eyes of the genial tenor: he could throw a "fly" with tolerable skill.

For a while the castle served its purpose well enough. But Mme. Patti liked to have her friends around her, and, finding that there was not sufficient space to entertain a goodly number of them, she caused some important additions to be made to the main structure. From first to last her Craig-y-Nos improvements were said to have cost her nearly £100,000. Nicolini being an ardent devotee of French or American billiards, a new billiard-room and a spacious drawing-room, with several bedrooms above, were added at one end. At the other was erected a huge conservatory, flanked in turn by a lofty winter garden containing some splendid palms and exotics. In this winter garden the hostess was wont in bad weather to take her midday stroll just before *déjeuner*, stopping now and then to converse with her favorite cockatoo, an enormous bird that was pleasanter to look upon than listen to.

Two novel features at Craig-y-Nos Castle at this period may here be mentioned. One was an installation of the electric light that was said to be among the first to be put up in a country house in the United Kingdom. The other item was a large orchestrion, made at Fribourg, in Switzerland, the musical resources of which were equally new to dwellers in an English (or Welsh) home. It stood in the billiard-room, and was worked by electricity. It had a rich pipe-organ tone, and if it could not compare, either in perfection of mechanism or variety of tonal combinations, with the more elaborate "orchestrelle" of a later day, it was nevertheless considered a remarkable instrument of its kind, and Mme. Patti was immensely proud of it. Moreover, while it was being played —generally in the evening, after dinner—the click of the billiard balls was bidden to cease, silence being requested ex-

It was during their stay at Cadoxton Hall that they heard Craig-y-Nos Castle was for sale.

cept for the lighter pieces, such as the "España" of the gifted French composer, Chabrier (Nicolini's cousin, by the way), when the hostess would call for her castanets and accentuate the rhythm of the waltz with characteristic dash and energy. Her castanet-playing was, indeed, exceptionally good.

She did not always spare her throat on these occasions. The orchestrion had only to give out some melody that she cared for, and her gorgeous voice would instantly be ringing through the spacious room, blending deliciously with the full, deep tone of the organ pipes. Strange and lovely did the familiar golden notes of Patti sound under such conditions! But it was always something good that "drew her out." She was not very fond of the merely tuneful *morceaux* or the worn-out operatic selections; and as time went on she enjoyed more and more listening to Wagner and certain of the "advanced" composers of that day.

This, then, was as a rule the nightly scene at Craig-y-Nos during the early years of the Patti-Nicolini period. Later on, after the theatre had been built, I was to have the privilege of joining the circle and witnessing it for myself, as will be seen in due course. But the picture varied little either now or in the time to come. When dinner was over there was usually an informal procession from the conservatory or the dining-room,—the former in summer, the latter in winter,—headed by the "little lady" leaning on the arm of her principal male guest.

Always *en grande toilette* of the latest Parisian model; always wearing some wonderful necklace, with bracelets, rings, and occasionally a dazzling tiara, chosen from her priceless collection of jewels; seated upon one of the comfortable lounges that skirted three sides of the billiard-table, she was invariably the centre of a bright, animated group, a veritable queen in the midst of her courtiers. For courtiers they were, most

of them, male and female, ready with a flattering speech, ever bidding for the gracious smile that each endeavored to win in turn. There they would drink their coffee and smoke (Mme. Patti did not object to the "fragrant weed," though she never indulged in it herself), while talking over the events of the day, making plans for the morrow, discussing various people, social and artistic, or, as has been said, listening to the orchestrion. Gifted with an abundance of ready wit and lively repartee, with an easy command of at least five languages, the Queen of Song, surrounded by her court, made a striking and alluring picture; nor could one ever forget that the personality of the central figure was that of Adelina Patti.

Among the wedding guests at Craig-y-Nos Castle was that able, straightforward, but unlucky American manager, Henry E. Abbey. Apparently he had arisen, phœnix-like, from the ashes of his colossal failure at the New York Metropolitan, three years previously; at any rate, he was here, either as principal or ambassador, with some fresh proposal in view. His object, of course, was to tempt the diva away from her Arcadian retirement. And, thanks once more to Nicolini's businesslike disposition, stimulated by enormous terms, he did not tempt in vain.

"Farewell" was now the *leitmotif* of Mr. Abbey's artful serenade—farewell, namely, to the American public, with a concert tour all over the United States and perhaps a few operatic performances in New York to wind up with. On reflection it seemed a good idea. For in many respects it harmonized with the singer's views concerning the nature of the work that would be most congenial to her during the remainder of her career.

Italian opera in England had, as has been said, gone from bad to worse. Its plight was now deplorable. Covent Garden only opened in 1886 for another brief season with chiefly

moderate artists, under the management of Signor Lago, Mr. Gye's former *régisseur*. The glory of the house had departed; nor was there any apparent prospect of its revival. Mme. Patti had no alternative but to keep aloof from such second-rate enterprises. Not even her immense reputation could have rescued the old institution from the impending *débâcle*. This might mean, therefore, that the greatest lyric artist of her time, while still in full possession of her vocal resources, would be allowed no further chance for the display of her unrivalled gifts upon the boards of a London opera house.

Such were the main considerations which, for the moment, at any rate, turned her aside from the branch of her art that she most loved, and with which she was most closely identified in the eyes of the world. It was not without regret that she followed the advice of her practical husband, backed up by her new secretary, Mr. Morini. There was no help for it.

She might, of course, have retired then and there, had she desired. Her savings, carefully guarded and advantageously invested for her by her old friend, Mr. Alfred de Rothschild, would even now have sufficed to keep her in luxury to the end of her days. But neither Mme. Patti nor Signor Nicolini dreamed of taking such a course. Indeed, both had begun to chafe under their life of enforced idleness when the festivities connected with the wedding had brought a crowd of friends to the castle, and among them not only the American but an English concert impresario. It was the latter who contrived to get in a successful broadside first. We shall see how.

To Mme. Patti the British Isles, as a sphere for concert enterprise, offered practically virgin soil. It might furnish a highly profitable substitute for the temporarily or—who could say?—perhaps permanently barren field of opera. But the responsibility for working the new territory would have to be undertaken by some one with capital other than her own. She

harbored no semblance of a desire to renew the experience of that unlucky tour in the United States which had been mismanaged by Signor Franchi in the winter of 1882. Neither was there heard from her side so much as a whisper of "farewell." That word was left solely for the American *entrepreneur* to pronounce.

Down to this time her appearances on the London concert platform had been few and far between. The Floral Hall concerts at Covent Garden of the early Gye days, the annual concerts given by Sir Julius Benedict and Mr. Kuhe, and her own "grand morning concerts" were now things of the past.[1] But in June, 1882, a "miscellaneous" concert was given by the artists of the Royal Italian Opera at the Royal Albert Hall. Among them were Patti, Albani, Sembrich, Nicolini, Mierzwinsky, Cotogni, and Edouard de Reszke. It was one of the first experiments of the kind attempted in the big hall, and it drew an overflowing audience, the diva contributing among other solos "I know that my Redeemer liveth." In the following month a similar undertaking was tried, with less success; and after that the form of entertainment does not seem to have been persevered with.

Then, in 1885, Mr. George Watts, a Brighton music-seller, engaged Mme. Patti for a London concert, and gave it, not in the Albert Hall (the directors for some reason refusing to let it to him), but at the old St. James's Hall, which was easily

[1] She sang again several times for Mr. Kuhe, but generally at his Brighton concerts. In his "Reminiscences" he mentions her singing there the entire garden scene from "Faust" as an operatic recital, the success of which "was nothing less than sensational." He reminds us that Adelina Patti sang for him at Brighton in 1861, the year of her English début, when "the expenses of the concert (including the salaries of the other vocalists) amounted to no more than £150." At his first Floral Hall concert she also appeared among the other Covent Garden stars, the arrangement with Mr. Gye being that he paid £400 and shared with him all receipts over and above that sum. Afterwards Patti grew more expensive.

filled to repletion. By an unlucky chance, Mr. Watts—a capable and enterprising individual—caught a chill and died on the very morning of the concert; and therewith ended his activities. He had, however, had an energetic co-worker in Mr. Ambrose Austin—well known as the manager of St. James's Hall and organizer of the annual Scotch and Irish Ballad Concerts—an astute, reliable man, thoroughly trusted by the public. Mr. Austin it was who now came to the much-sought prima donna with a proposal for four concerts at the Albert Hall, to be given in June and July, 1886, with an orchestra under Mr. (afterwards Sir) W. G. Cusins, the conductor of the Philharmonic Society. Terms were agreed upon, and the matter was arranged without delay.

These concerts proved a tremendous success; and they resulted in a huge profit for Mr. Austin. He had the good sense to surround his "leading lady" with artists of the first rank. In addition to Trebelli—still a beautiful singer—there were Edward Lloyd, Santley, and Foli, three of the finest native vocalists. Sims Reeves had also been engaged for one concert; but the grand old tenor, now close on seventy, was placed *hors de combat* by his regular summer attack of hay fever, and Nicolini sang in his stead. The instrumentalists were also first-rate, and the combination of talent at each concert was such as has rarely been equalled at affairs of the kind.

Thus was inaugurated the famous "Patti Concerts," which for a couple of decades longer were to draw the public in "tens of thousands" to the gigantic building at Kensington Gore. They served their purpose well enough. They afforded Londoners practically their sole opportunity for hearing the phenomenal singer who had hitherto cast her spell over two generations of opera-lovers. It may be admitted that the personal charm of the artist and the fascination of the actress could never be exercised at the Albert Hall as they had been at Covent Garden. Still, the glorious *voix d'or* was irresist-

ible even in that vast space. The carrying power of her softest *mezza voce* was a miracle of nature and art combined that never failed to awaken astonishment in the listening multitudes.

This wonderful gift of Patti's received its most striking manifestation in the inevitable "Home, sweet home," which always used to send the people away happy. I have dwelt upon it already, but cannot resist speaking of it again. Ravishing in its grace, unsurpassable in its sweetness and tenderness, her singing of the old ballad never failed to create a genuine and profound emotion. At the Albert Hall it was an experience absolutely unique. Merely to watch the breathless and expectant audience with heads bent forward, hanging eagerly upon every note as it issued like a pearl from Patti's lips, was ever an extraordinary sight. What is more, the well-worn ditty helped, perhaps better than certain of the more showy operatic *morceaux*, to compensate for what was lacking of artistic quality in the material of these composite entertainments.

Besides singing at the new Albert Hall concerts, Mme. Patti further helped to relieve the dulness of a singularly quiet season by making a solitary appearance in opera, on the afternoon of July 15, for the benefit of Colonel James Henry Mapleson, who, sad to relate, was now reduced to sore pecuniary straits. The performance took place at the Drury Lane Theatre—lent for the occasion by Augustus Harris—and it drew an overflowing audience at augmented prices, netting a goodly sum for the beneficiary. The opera was "Il Barbiere," and, as it happened, London in the summer of 1886 was full of Colonial visitors, ready to pay any price for the privilege of hearing Patti in her renowned assumption of *Rosina*. Happily, she was not only in good voice, but well supported by Nicolini as *Almaviva* and Del Puente as *Figaro*, with Arditi as conductor.

We have kept Mr. Abbey waiting some time for the reply to his tempting proposition. As a matter of fact, he obtained his contract very soon after Mr. Austin got his; for the two ventures did not clash, the American tour being projected for the following winter and spring of 1886–87. The reasons why the latter appealed to Mme. Patti have already been made clear; and, apart from the lure of Mr. Abbey's munificent terms,—$5,000 for each appearance, or a total of $250,000 (£50,000) with a guaranteed minimum of fifty performances,—there can be no doubt that she was genuinely desirous of bidding what she then regarded as a definite farewell to the warm-hearted public that had witnessed her earliest successes in the opera house and the concert room.

In the light of what subsequently happened, it is well to lay stress upon the artist's honesty of intention in this matter of American "farewells." For other good-bye visits were to follow after the one now referred to—the actual final "farewell" not, indeed, until seventeen years later. It will be remembered that the ball was originally set rolling by Mr. Mapleson. He did so entirely on his own responsibility. Nevertheless, the present Abbey tour was generally described in the United States as "Farewell No. 2"; so that, when further repetitions occurred, it became increasingly difficult for the sceptical American journalist ("from Missouri," let us say) to believe that the whole thing was not in the nature of a business dodge akin to the oft-repeated "compulsory sale" of jewelry or furniture—*i.e.*, to make money by deceiving the public.

Whatever her managers may have done, Mme. Patti was unquestionably above trickery of this sort. It may be argued that, having once bidden adieu to America, she ought never to have gone there again; but to do so is to ignore the viewpoint of the American public, which learned from Europe year after year that its old favorite was singing as well as

ever. Was she to refuse them the opportunity of hearing her once more because it had been announced—as she no doubt thought at the time—that the previous visit would be her last? It may have been an erroneous supposition. It may even have been a profitable mistake. But it was not a mere excuse, a discreditable device for squeezing dollars out of American pockets, as one or two influential writers (who ought to have known better) thought fit to assert.

Moreover, it is only fair to add, in extenuation, that the "farewells" of great singers have often been renewed, not once, but again and yet again, and have been extended over lengthy periods, to the entire satisfaction alike of old and new generations of admirers. For, as long as the voice remains young, the age of the artist is immaterial. And, in the case of a singer whose organ remained so wonderfully preserved as that of Adelina Patti, there was abundant justification for prolonging her adieux until late in life.

In 1886–87 she was so completely in possession of her fullest powers that many of her transatlantic critics refused, and wisely, to contemplate the possibility of her never coming back. On the whole, the tour was an unprecedented success. The receipts "on the road" touched unparalleled figures, and Mr. Abbey must have done well by his enterprise. Yet at the outset New York was characteristically coy. It had never, as we know, cared to hear the diva in aught save opera. A miscellaneous concert programme, ending with an act from "Martha" or "Semiramide," did well enough in the provinces; but four concerts, consisting of this sort of *pot pourri*, starting the tour at the Academy of Music in the month of November, met with that cool indifference which New York, better than any city in the world, knows how to display towards the star who does not give it what it wants.

On her return from the Western States in the following

April, there was another story to tell. Abbey, now possessed of the requisite capital, as well as the courage, took the Metropolitan Opera House, and announced Mme. Patti in six "farewell" representations, with the artistic support of excellent singers like Scalchi, Galassi, Del Puente, Abramoff, and Novara, the indispensable Arditi conducting. The response of the public was immediate and sensational; the receipts for the half-dozen nights amounted to about $70,000 (£14,000). As a faithful chronicler has since written: "Prices of admission were abnormal, and so was the audience. Fashion heard Patti at the Metropolitan, and so did suburban folk, who came to $10 opera in business coats, bonnets, and shawls. Such audiences were never seen in the theatre before or since."[1]

The six operas given were "La Traviata," "Semiramide," "Faust," "Carmen," "Lucia," and "Martha"; and as regards the fourth of these it may be noted that New York did not reverse the verdict of London. It did not hail in the new *Carmen* another Minnie Hauk *plus* the personality and voice of Patti. On the contrary, the house was frigid, and the critics, plain-spoken as usual, declared that this was not *Carmen*. One asks, how came the sensitive prima donna to risk such confirmation of a distinctly adverse opinion? The natural conclusion is that she did not feel inclined to accept the Covent Garden decision; that she thought the American public might take the opposite view and acclaim her in the part. Moreover, there were those lovely Spanish costumes lying ready in her trunks. What a pity not to show them beneath the broad proscenium of the Metropolitan!

Thus was finally frustrated a wish that had evidently been very dear to the heart of the artist. That it involved an error of judgment was never, in all probability, realized either by

[1] "Chapters of Opera," by H. E. Krehbiel, p. 16.

MME. PATTI WITH HER NIECE CARLINA, 1887

herself or by those around her; otherwise it is hard to believe that she would have elected to tempt Providence more than once and on both sides of the Atlantic. And, after all, how few ambitions did she cherish that were not fulfilled at some period of her extraordinary career!

On her return home (May, 1887) it was stated in the English newspapers that Mme. Patti had paid her last professional visit to the United States; and the announcement was no doubt made and received at the time in perfect good faith. But, as will be seen, it again proved to be "premature." Meanwhile her labors for the summer of 1887 did not end until she had sung at two Albert Hall concerts, under the management of Ambrose Austin, followed by a solitary performance in opera at Her Majesty's Theatre on Friday, July 1.

The latter event derived its chief interest from the fact that it marked Mme. Patti's one and only appearance upon the boards of the old opera house in the Haymarket. It was wholly unexpected. Some strange happenings were, however, connected with this, the concluding phase of a melancholy Maplesonian campaign which had started under difficulties, which nobody wanted, and which was to terminate its miserable existence at the very moment when Augustus Harris was laying the foundations for the renascence of opera in Great Britain at Drury Lane Theatre. The diva's share in her old manager's last desperate plunge is epitomized in the following paragraph, taken from the pages of a chronicle of the time:[1]

Mme. Adelina Patti made her first (and only) appearance on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre in Verdi's "Traviata," on Friday,

[1] *Musical Notes*, an "Annual Critical Record of Important Musical Events," by Herman Klein: London, *The Stage Office*, 1888.

July 1, 1887. To the vast majority of Mme. Patti's admirers her performance in opera during the present season came as a surprise. At the time of her return from America it was anticipated that she would sing at one or other of the London opera houses; but the negotiations all fell through, and when Mme. Patti went home to Craig-y-Nos after her last concert in town, it was distinctly believed that she intended remaining there for her summer holiday.

However, Mr. Mapleson subsequently arranged matters with Mr. Abbey (who then had the exclusive right to Mme. Patti's services in London), and here was the diva once more exercising her old fascination, in the character of *Violetta,* before an audience that filled every available nook and corner of Her Majesty's. It is scarcely needful to add that the great artist was enthusiastically received. For herself, indeed, the evening constituted a long series of triumphs. Of her supporters on the stage the less said the better.

Mme. Patti was to have appeared in "Il Barbiere" on the following Tuesday, but an attack of hoarseness was declared to be the cause that prevented her singing. This circumstance compelled Mr. Mapleson to close his theatre once more. He announced that it would reopen on the Saturday with "Faust," Mme. Patti appearing as *Marguerite.* The house opened, truly, but the opera given was "Carmen," with Mme. Trebelli in the title-character, and, curious to relate, no charge was made for admission to the performance [*sic*]. This, however, was the "last dying flicker." Thenceforward the doors of Her Majesty's remained closed, so far as Mr. Mapleson was concerned, terminating the most remarkable series of operatic ventures ever conducted by an impresario in course of a single season.

In October of the same year Maurice Strakosch died in Paris, where he had been living for some time. Just before his death he wrote and published the amusing but unreliable and somewhat straggling volume of "Souvenirs" so frequently quoted in these pages. The most conspicuous feature therein is the author's name, which it must have afforded him singular pleasure to see in print, since he speaks of himself only

in the third person and does so on nearly every page. The portion of the book that he devoted to his renowned sister-in-law was relatively small; but he bore her no malice, and was obviously proud of his association with her, though too prone occasionally to overestimate the value of his own services, artistic as well as commercial. On the whole, Maurice Strakosch was what the world to-day would describe as "not a bad sort," and, all allowances made, it is fair to assert that Adelina Patti owed a great deal to his practical experience and sage counsel at the most critical period of her life.

CHAPTER XVI

Patti's "Banner" Year (1888)—First Visit to South America—Past and Present Operatic Fees Compared: All Records Broken—Enthusiasm and Gold in the Argentine—Total of £100,000 Earned in Eighteen Months—"Roméo" Transferred to the Paris Opéra—Historic Gala Performance: Patti and Jean de Reszke Sing, Gounod Conducts—The New *Juliette*—American Tours of 1889–90 under Abbey and Grau—Patti Sings *Lakmé*—A Visit to Mexico—Showers of Gifts and Honors—Return to London, Summer of 1890—A Cold and Its Consequences—Patti's Voice Attains Its Zenith—The Secret of Its Preservation—Her "Advice to Singers"—Anecdotes of Her Presence of Mind (Told by Herself)—Her Capacity as a Dramatic Soprano—An American Criticism Criticized

THE period between the January and the July of 1888 was the most lucrative in Mme. Patti's whole professional career. In those six months she earned larger sums than have ever been paid, before or since, to any artist in the history of musical enterprise. It was the epoch that included her first visit to South America.

For a long while the Eldorado that had enriched Italy's two greatest tenors—Masini and Tamagno—had been patiently waiting for her to bring with her her largest coffers and fill them with gold. But prior to her second marriage the prize had not appeared to be comfortably within her grasp. The mind of the Marquis de Caux had been occupied more with the courts of Europe and imperial or royal decorations than possible fortunes to be won in the Brazils or the Argentine. The practical Nicolini was, on the contrary, inclined to cast a longing eye on those distant countries.

One day, while travelling in the United States, Nicolini had discussed the idea of such a tour with Henry Abbey, whose

deft management of the American "Farewell No. 2" had created in him both confidence and esteem. Another reliable New York manager, in the person of Marcus Mayer, was also consulted. All agreed that the moment was ripe, as American financiers say, for the "cutting of the melon." Negotiations with the local impresarios were at once entered upon.

Now, the South American republics, notably the Argentine, pay opera singers of high renown bigger sums than any other countries in the world. The substantial amounts earned in North America, Canada, and Australasia by popular British artists (Melba and Clara Butt, for example) cannot be compared with the golden harvests reaped in the wealthy and opulent capitals of these South American states. In order to induce Adelina Patti to visit Buenos Ayres, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro, etc., the managers of the opera houses there immediately expressed their readiness to break all existing records in the matter of terms. If she would come, she should receive not only the guaranteed fee of £1,000 per representation paid her in the United States, but a further percentage upon the gross receipts that would probably increase her *cachet* by half as much again. She accepted without hesitation.

Great singers have always commanded big salaries. In 1734 the famous male vocalist, Farinelli, received more than £8,000 for the season in London—a sum representing at least six times that amount in the money of to-day. A little over a century ago Catalani earned £16,000 in one year. Ninety years ago Pasta was paid £3,700 for a three-months' season in London; and a few years after that the peerless Malibran received £5,000 for a similar period. But many of these highly paid singers of a bygone era succeeded in ruining their managers; whereas Patti, as has already been shown, invariably brought them profit. It was on the nights when she was not singing that they incurred losses; generally because

they were so foolish as to persist in charging the same high prices for inferior artists, instead of reducing prices on "off nights" to the average theatre level.

Mme. Patti was absent from England altogether nine months, namely, from December 10, 1887, until September 3, 1888. She was accompanied by Signor Nicolini, by her niece, Miss Carlina Patti, Mr. Abbey, Mr. Marcus Mayer, and Mr. Augustus F. M. Spalding, one of her oldest and most trusted English friends, besides, of course her faithful companion, "Karo." Before leaving London she appeared at an evening concert at the Albert Hall; and it was noteworthy not only for her exceptionally fine singing, but for a gathering which, in spite of one of the densest fogs ever experienced in the metropolis, filled the building in every part.

Proceeding leisurely by way of Paris and Madrid to Lisbon, she appeared at the Royal Opera House in the Spanish capital (her native city), and received £3,000 for six performances. The Madrileños welcomed their celebrated compatriot with characteristic warmth. Her forty-fifth birthday occurred during the visit; and they refused, despite her Italian parentage and American upbringing, to allow that she was aught but a pure Spaniard.

The party took passage at Lisbon on board the French steamer *Congo* for Buenos Ayres. There twenty-four representations of opera were given at the Politeama Argentino. This magnificent auditorium, which accommodated five thousand people, was crammed on each occasion, the receipts on the first night exceeding £4,000. It was stated that speculators made a profit of as much as £6 a seat for stalls. The twenty-four performances realized no less than £70,000, of which sum Mme. Patti received as her share £38,400, or £1,600 a night. This, of course, easily cast into the shade all the previous records associated with Masini and Tamagno; nor have

such figures been since approached either in any other city or by any other opera singer.

Going on to Montevideo, eight representations were given at the Teatro Solis, and for these the total receipts amounted to about £20,000. It had been arranged that afterwards the party should proceed to Rio de Janeiro and appear at the Don Pedro Secunda Opera House; but, an epidemic of yellow fever having broken out there, some of the company refused to proceed. Four farewell performances were, however, given in Buenos Ayres, at which the receipts averaged £3,570 a night. On the occasion of Mme. Patti's "benefit" scenes of the wildest enthusiasm were enacted. Bouquets and floral tributes were thrown upon the stage in such profusion that the prima donna, when coming forward to take her calls, was "actually compelled to tread among flowers." The President of the Argentine Republic and other "notables" made her handsome presents, and attentions of every kind were showered upon the distinguished visitor.

From first to last, the tour was an unprecedented triumph. It was admirably managed, and, in a financial sense, by far the most successful that Mme. Patti ever undertook. It was estimated that her share of the total receipts exceeded £50,000, four fifths of which could be reckoned as her profit. Her health throughout was excellent, and only twice in Buenos Ayres had a performance to be postponed. The voyage home was made in the *Ionic* from Rio direct, *via* Teneriffe, to Plymouth.

Another profitable tour at about this time was undertaken in Spain under the management of Messrs. Schürmann and Pollini, of Hamburg. In that instance, however, Mme. Patti and her husband were content with a minimum guaranty of £400 a representation, which would have been £100 less than the sum paid her by Mapleson during his final season at Covent Garden. As it was, the total receipts were alleged

to have amounted to £43,927 for thirty-one performances, or an average of £1,417. Out of this Mme. Patti took altogether £12,400; while other expenses came roughly to £20,000, leaving the respectable profit of £11,500.

Altogether, in the course of eighteen months (1888–89) she must have made an income closely approximating the extraordinary figure of £100,000. It is hardly necessary to add that such a sum was never before earned by any singer within the same space of time.

After a welcome holiday of six weeks, spent at Craig-y-Nos Castle, Mme. Patti-Nicolini (as in private life she was now invariably called) journeyed to Paris to recreate the rôle of the heroine in Gounod's "Roméo et Juliette" when it was transferred from the répertoire of the Opéra-Comique to that of the Opéra or Académie Nationale de Musique. The event was fixed for November 28, 1888; and, when passing through London on the 20th, she remained overnight to take part in an Albert Hall concert, at which there also appeared three famous British artists, Edward Lloyd, Foli, and Mme. Patey—the great contralto joining her in the "Quis est homo" from Rossini's "Stabat Mater."

To this noteworthy *reprise* of Gounod's "Roméo" reference has been already made in an earlier chapter. It attracted at the time the attention of the entire musical world; and for several reasons. To begin with, it signalized the reappearance of Adelina Patti on the Paris stage after many years' absence. It marked her début at the Opéra; for in bygone days she had always sung either at the Italiens or the Théâtre-Lyrique. It was the first time she had sung an opera in the French language, either in the French capital or elsewhere. It was the first—and, as events proved, the last—time that she appeared in public in the same opera and upon the same stage with the gifted Polish tenor, Jean de Reszke,

who was now the popular idol not only of Parisian but of London opera-goers. And, finally, Gounod, who was himself to conduct the *première*, had touched up the music and composed expressly for Jean de Reszke a new finale to the third act, which was among the features that were to impart fresh interest to a hitherto somewhat unappreciated (because unequal) opera.

It must not be supposed that Mme. Patti's participation in this event came about without some exercise of diplomatic skill. As a rule, she refused point-blank to do anything at short notice; and, until the early part of October, there had not been the slightest idea of inviting her to undertake her old part under these novel conditions. The circumstances that led to the request and its acceptance are worth relating.

It had been arranged, in the first instance, that the part of *Juliette* should be filled by the talented French soprano, Mme. Darclée. She actually sang at some of the preliminary rehearsals; but soon it became apparent that the lady was suffering from an attack of "nerves," which grew more acute every day, until at last all hope of her coöperation in the revival had to be abandoned. Then it was that M. Gailhard, one of the directors of the Opéra, bethought him of the celebrated *cantatrice* who had heretofore been the only operatic *Juliette* that the world, outside France, had either known or cared about. Without losing a day (there was no time for correspondence) and without mentioning a word to a soul,—least of all to Gounod,—M. Gailhard hurriedly crossed the Channel and made tracks as directly as he could for Craig-y-Nos Castle—a long, slow, tedious journey at the best of times.

The surprise of the master and mistress when the tranquillity of their Welsh retreat was thus abruptly ruffled by the unexpected arrival of the manager of the Paris Opéra can perhaps be imagined. Fortunately, he was an old friend

and could count upon a cordial reception; for M. Gailhard had been formerly an operatic baritone of distinction (he was a pupil of Faure) and had often sung *Mephistopheles* to Mme. Patti's *Marguerite* in the Gye days at Covent Garden. Mme. Patti at once proceeded to guess the object of his visit—and guessed wrong.

"I know," she said, "why you have come to see me. You want me to sing at the Paris Exposition [of 1889]."

"No, madame," answered M. Gailhard. "I want you to honor me by saying 'yes' to an entirely different proposition; one of a far more pressing nature." And then, with all a Frenchman's dialectical subtlety, he laid before her his real mission. It did not at first seem fated to succeed.

"Impossible!" was Mme. Patti's reply. "I have always sung *Juliette* in Italian. I have concert engagements in the English provinces until the middle of November. Besides, I sing at the Albert Hall on the 20th. I don't see how I am to learn the French text and be in Paris in time for the 28th."

"Would you only be willing to make the attempt?" urged the worthy director—"for Gounod's sake, for my sake, for everybody's sake? Think of the added lustre that your presence will confer upon an occasion to which *tout Paris* is looking forward. Moreover, if necessary we will postpone the date a little. *Essayez-le donc, je vous en prie, madame!*"

The argument was not without effect; but the prima donna was unwilling to make an immediate decision. "No, it won't do to alter the date, because I must be back in London to sing again at the Albert Hall on December 11. But you must give me time to consider. I will talk it over with Ernest and let you know in two or three days. I want to have a look at the score and see if I can really venture to sing it in French."

M. Gailhard left the castle in a jubilant frame of mind, for he felt sure he had succeeded. He returned to Paris, and

communicated his secret to every one concerned except the venerable composer, whom it would not be wise to disappoint, especially as he had meanwhile accepted another artist in Mme. Darclée's place. Forty-eight hours later—to be exact, on the 24th of October—the exultant manager interrupted a rehearsal and flourished before the astonished gaze of M. Gounod the following telegram:

M. Gailhard, Director of the Opéra, Paris. My dear Colleague—I was deeply touched by your visit to me at Craig-y-Nos Castle. You invite me to assist in the performance of an artistic masterpiece conducted by the Maître himself. My reply is, Yes. PATTI.

The composer's joy was too profound to find expression in speech. He embraced every member of the company within reach, and despatched a message to his *chère Adelina* thanking her with all his heart for the promise of her "gracious and inestimable help." He saw her immediately after her arrival in Paris. She had already mastered the French words, and he declared her accent to be impeccable—"worthy of the best traditions of the Opéra," as he neatly put it. Then came two, if not three, private rehearsals, with Gounod at the piano and Jean de Reszke to hum with her the delicious sequence of love duets; finally, one stage rehearsal and the *répétition générale*—all within the space of about six days!

I went over to Paris expressly to attend the new production of "Roméo." It was one of the most brilliant functions ever witnessed in the imposing *salle* of the Opéra. In my despatches to the *Sunday Times*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and other English papers, superlatives inevitably abounded. I shall never forget the reception accorded to Gounod and Patti—to the former as he made his way into the orchestra; to the latter when she entered the Hall of the Capulets, led

for a few steps by *Juliette's* father, then tripping down the stage with all her accustomed *brio,* radiant with smiles, exquisitely gowned, yet without too many jewels, looking positively more youthful than when she had last sung the part at Covent Garden a dozen years before.

But what a difference now in her portrayal of Shakspere's heroine! Nervous beyond the common she may have been; the accidental skipping of four bars in the waltz told eloquently of unwonted excitement. (Everybody was nervous, Gounod most of all, although sheer presence of mind enabled him more than once to save the situation.) Still, this was quite another *Juliet;* something more than a picture; a flesh-and-blood Italian girl, in all things redolent of Southern passion at its height; in short, the ideal embodiment, so far as the opera will allow, of the loving and lovable maiden and wife depicted by Shakspere. How she sang there is no need to say, but from the dramatic point of view the famous artist that night took the sternest of French critics by surprise. Not a word was uttered or written save in unstinted admiration.

Side by side with this fragrant and exquisite impersonation stood the no less incomparable *Roméo* of Jean de Reszke—one of those rare poetic conceptions, supreme alike as a histrionic and a musical achievement, that only a truly great artist could have indelibly stamped upon the memory of a generation. Mario's *Romeo* was now completely forgotten; Nicolini's gently brushed aside. Gounod put it in a single sentence: "This is my ideal *Roméo,* even as Patti is my ideal *Juliette!*" The beauty of the Polish tenor's French diction lent a new charm to every phrase. "Non, ce n'est pas le jour; c'est le doux rossignol!" had never before poured from singer's lips with such poignancy of tone and utterance. For ten years (or rather less) after this was Jean de Reszke to hold the opera-lovers of Paris, London, and New York in

thrall with the thrilling ecstasy of these passages; and he, too, has had no successor.

Except in Paris during the few representations that were practicable in the time at her disposal, Mme. Patti and M. de Reszke were not afterwards heard together in Gounod's rejuvenated opera. Her place at the Opéra was subsequently filled by the two American sopranos, Emma Eames and Suzanne Adams. In London, the following season, it was Melba who shared the honors with the Polish tenor, whose lamented brother Edouard, by the way, always displayed his noble basso with unsurpassable grandeur in the music of *Frère Laurent*.

Somehow a slight estrangement occurred between Mme. Patti and Jean de Reszke after their association in this notable revival. What gave rise to it I am unable to say, nor does that now matter; but, oddly enough, it was my good fortune to bring about a *rapprochement* between them. They had not met or spoken since "Roméo," when one evening they found themselves in each other's company at dinner at my flat in Whitehall Court.[1] That was nearly eight years later.

Mme. Patti then greeted her old friends Jean and Edouard as if the links in their long spell of friendship had never been even strained, much less broken. At table she sat between Jean and myself; while Nicolini talked about his "Strads" to the great 'cellist, Piatti. A few years later, M. de Reszke, following Mme. Patti's example, added a small theatre to the resources of his elegant house in the Rue de la Faisanderie; and more than once, when visiting Paris, she delighted him and his guests by appearing upon the little stage in some scene from her well-remembered répertoire.

Perhaps the most agreeable and interesting of all Mme.

[1] The incidents of this reception in honor of Mme. Patti were described in "Thirty Years of Musical Life in London."

Patti's tours on the American continent were those carried out under the joint management of Messrs. Henry Abbey and Maurice Grau in 1889 and 1890. The earlier one was preceded by the customary round of concerts in the English provinces, and no fewer than three appearances (in January and February) at the Albert Hall.

These home concerts, it should be noted, were now organized and directed by Messrs. Harrison, of Birmingham, who gave them at their own risk (not a serious one, presumably) and paid Mme. Patti a fixed sum for each concert—£600 in the provinces and eight hundred guineas in London. Mr. Percy Harrison, the nephew of the founder of this well-known firm, had engaged her to sing at their annual "Subscription Concerts" at the Birmingham Town Hall as far back as September, 1874; and after that, when not absent from England, she appeared at them regularly once every year until her retirement. He now took up the functions of "concert impresario" to Mme. Patti initiated—in London only—by Ambrose Austin, and proved himself a faithful and energetic successor to that trusty veteran.[1]

If eight hundred guineas a concert paid by Percy Harrison indicated the high-water mark of singers' fees in the British metropolis, the 1889 contract with Abbey and Grau attained the "top notch" for South America. The latter was for another series of operatic performances, and it stipulated a nightly payment of £1,250, plus half the gross receipts over £2,400. It need only be stated that the audiences in Buenos Ayres and elsewhere were, if possible, larger than during Mme. Patti's earlier tour, to make manifest that a very large

[1] Percy Harrison was a concert manager in the true sense, inasmuch as he undertook the entire financial responsibility and paid so much a concert to all the celebrated artists who toured the country under his direction. He died in December, 1917, at the age of seventy-one.

sum was again realized; and it was the same story on her last visit to those parts in 1893.

Lower terms were commanded on the American continent during the autumn and winter of 1889–90, when operations were restricted to the leading cities of the United States and Mexico. Nevertheless, it was stated on reliable authority that Mme. Patti's share of that undertaking amounted in round figures to £32,000 for an aggregate of forty-three appearances. In addition, she returned loaded with presents, including a crown of solid gold and a pair of ruby-and-diamond earrings, presented to her in Mexico City by President Diaz and his wife. Well might a London newspaper, recording these facts at the time, make the prophetic remark, "So long as this great vocalist can earn such sums, she is not likely to retire!"

Indeed, much less stress was now laid upon the word "farewell" than had been the case during the preceding tours in the States. It no longer constituted the dominant note, because experience had shown that there was no necessity to employ what Americans called the "extra punch" as an inducement for them to go and hear Patti. Also, it had been made evident that present use of the "farewell" device was premature, and therefore inexact. It might have continued to be so. Still, in New York the asset was apparently too valuable to be ignored altogether, and there it was utilized by Abbey and Grau with sufficient persistency to arouse the ire of some of the musical critics. The fact was regrettable in a sense, but it may be repeated that the sin was purely a managerial one and ought not to have been visited upon the head of the artist.

Her companions on the tour now referred to included several singers of distinction: the famous tenor Tamagno, Albani, Nordica, Fabbri, Ravelli, Del Puente, Castelmary, and

Novara. With Tamagno in the troupe a special feature was naturally made of Verdi's "Otello," which had been produced at La Scala only two years before and was an absolute novelty in America. Some one suggested that Patti, the peerless *Desdemona* of Rossini's opera, would be far more interesting in the more complex creation of Verdi. She did not welcome the idea. She admired the work in many ways, but the music of *Desdemona*, as conceived by the veteran maestro of Sant' Agata, somehow did not appeal to her.[1]

A further motive for Mme. Patti's attitude may be ascribed to the fact that she had for some time been absorbed in the study of another attractive new character, to wit, the charming heroine of Delibes' "Lakmé." To this she had taken a great fancy. The music suited her to perfection; and altogether the rôle of the self-sacrificing Indian maiden was well designed for the display of her vocal gifts and her growing *flair* for picturesque, romantic drama. Unfortunately, the opera had to be sung to an Italian version of the French text, the grace of which it in no way reflected. Given for the first time in Boston (the receipts amounting to $20,000), the performance proved quite unworthy both of the work and of the new *Lakmé*. Her singing of the familiar "Bell Song" easily roused the house to a high pitch of enthusiasm; her personal triumph, however, was marred by the inefficiency of those supporting her. In New York it was the same. There "the performance was so desperately slipshod that it awakened only pity for Delibes' work."[2]

Mme. Patti never sang the part of *Lakmé* in London. It came too late to take a place in her regular repertory, for

[1] The part was sung in the United States by Mme. Albani, who achieved success in it and worthily supported Tamagno in his superb delineation of the Moor. But Del Puente, the ideal *Toreador* of "Carmen," did not prove an equally good substitute for Maurel, the original *Iago*.

[1] "Chapters of Opera."

JULIETTE, 1888

her active career in opera had now all but reached its termination. It was, however, the only important character that she ever assumed in a foreign opera house without appearing in it in England.

The main incidents of this American tour of 1889–90 have been amusingly described by the late Mme. Arditi, an amiable and witty Irish lady, who recounted them in a series of letters to her daughter.[1] She tells how the company first assembled at Chicago in December, 1889, in time for the inauguration of the new Auditorium—just completed at a cost of eight million dollars. "The opening night is to be devoted to the dedication and to the making of sundry speeches, while Patti will sing 'Home, sweet home' (the only musical item), *for which she will be paid £800!*"

From Chicago they travelled direct to Mexico:

As we approached Texas it seemed as though the roads were garnished with cactus plants, and all along the line the natives turn out of their huts to stare at Patti's car, which bears her name in large letters and is, of course, *the* great attraction. . . . To-night we are invited to dine with the diva in her car, which is most luxurious; it is, in fact, fit for any queen. Her suite is decorated in the most artistic fashion, her monogram being interspersed here and there on the walls with flowers and musical instruments; the salon is furnished with lounges and chairs of pale blue plush, and her bedroom is made of inlaid satinwood, with a brass bedstead, a plush counterpane bearing her monogram exquisitely embroidered; while she has every luxury, such as a long glass, bath, electric light, piano, etc. . . .

Mexico at last! A perfect paradise of a place. . . . The house for our first performance was magnificent. Such wealth, dresses, and diamonds; such a galaxy of beauty, and such appreciative though exacting audiences, one does not often see combined. . . . I heard of a lady who positively paid £30 for a box, and £14 for two seats in the gallery for her maid and her husband's valet! . . .

1 "My Reminiscences," by Luigi Arditi, p. 275, etc.

Patti has just sent us in a delicious dish from her table; she has brought her own *chef* with her.

The stay in Mexico City lasted until the end of January. The season there was a great financial success, the people being "so crazy" about the opera that they actually pawned their jewelry to buy seats. Mme. Arditi goes on to say:

Patti's benefit, which took place on the 29th of January, was a tremendous success. The house was a wonderful sight, and the gifts presented to her were extraordinary. Mrs. Clark was thinking of spending a fabulous sum on flowers for Patti; but I advised her to give Adelina something she could keep in remembrance of her; consequently she brought an exquisite little clock in the shape of a Sedan chair, which Luigi [Arditi] handed to her from the orchestra. Grau gave her a card-case inlaid with diamonds, the President's wife a filigree silver box containing precious coins, while many other souvenirs were presented to her. "La Traviata" was the opera, and Patti was in perfect voice. . . .

My little dog Chiquito goes with me to the theatre every night. Patti takes hers to her dressing-room.

On the voyage from New York to Liverpool Mme. Patti, unfortunately, caught a severe cold. She was under engagement to Mr. Kuhe to sing at the Albert Hall (on May 14, 1890), and, anxious not to disappoint either her old friend or the public, she battled with a sharp attack of hoarseness and duly appeared. It was a great pity she did so. The audience failed to grasp the situation. Unable to sing the pieces she was down for, she was obliged to substitute others, and, worse still, to decline the encores that were uproariously demanded. After "Home, sweet home," a noisy disturbance ensued. The audience evidently thought there was nothing the matter with the artist, and forgot how generous she was as a rule. There was, of course, no excuse for its unseemly behavior, which was

prolonged for several minutes—indeed, until after Mme. Patti had actually left the hall.

Next day the *Daily News* gave the following account of the episode:

> It was in vain that Mr. Kuhe appeared on the platform, and, being denied a hearing, complacently seated himself in a chair till the noise might subside. It was equally in vain that M. Hollman attempted some violoncello solos, and, finding himself utterly inaudible amid the din, finally left the platform. The plucky conduct of the popular violoncellist seemed to recall the audience to a fitting sense of their behaviour, and after another brief disturbance, which was sternly repressed, Mme. Patey [the contralto] was allowed to sing a song by Tosti. In defence of the public, it should be said that at the Patti concerts encores are expected, and that during the past few years, although she has rarely been announced for more than three songs, yet that loud and continued applause has usually induced her to sing six and often seven times on a single evening. That a similar complaisance to the demands of the audience would last night have been unwise, the state of Mme. Patti's voice, however, amply showed.

In consequence of her excessive exertion on this occasion, Mme. Patti was not well enough to appear at a second concert, which had been announced for some date in June. Fortunately, she had no further engagements that summer, and was thus able to take a lengthy rest; but her voice did not recover its full strength for several weeks. It was the first time she had ever suffered long and serious ill effects from a similar cause. Possibly she had never before literally strained her voice by singing on a severe cold. The result clearly indicated that, notwithstanding her wonderful constitution, she could not now begin to "take liberties" with impunity.

There can be no question that the amazing freshness of

her organ at this period was largely due to the constant care that had been exercised from the outset to spare her from over-fatigue. Adelina Patti was now able to look back upon an active career of thirty years, without reckoning the work done in her childhood. Yet the most candid criticism could point to nothing more perceptible in the way of deterioration than a somewhat reduced compass and a shade less brilliancy of tone in the head register; while, to atone for this slight falling-off, the chest notes had grown more powerful and the medium more rich, more resonant, than before. The younger Desmond Ryan, writing in the *Standard* (January, 1889), put it accurately when he said:

> Those who remember that far-off evening, more than a quarter of a century ago, when a young girl appeared on the stage of Covent Garden, attired in the peasant costume of *Amina* . . . might well be lost in admiration at the full, luscious tones displayed last night in Handel's "From mighty kings." As time goes on, Mme. Patti's voice gains in volume what it loses in compass, while its flexibility remains unsurpassed and unsurpassable.

Joseph Bennett would not acknowledge that any marked change was yet to be observed. His complaint was rather that she now sang so little in London; he deplored the loss inflicted thereby on opera. Writing about an Albert Hall concert on the eve of her departure for one of her American tours, he said in the *Daily Telegraph:*

> It is a matter of regret that the public should have had so few chances of hearing Mme. Patti either in the theatre or concert room during the last season. The withdrawal of an artist endowed with rare talents is likely to prove of serious consequences to Italian opera in this country, where fashion has begun to show it indifference, and where art of a different kind is busy undermining long-established forms. At such a moment the absence of its most gifted illustrator is felt severely, since there is, unfortunately, no one left

with the genius necessary to uphold successfully an institution that has, in spite of many failings and follies, entertained generations with vocalisation often brought to the highest point of excellence.

That this point was well-nigh reached in the performance last night of Rossini's air, "Bel raggio," cannot with fairness be gainsaid. The beautiful melody seemed to flow with the spontaneity that affects us in the warbling of birds. Yet, though appearing altogether free and unconstrained, the phrases were, in fact, so carefully modelled and so truly placed as to form together a complete and finished musical structure. Such a display was thoroughly enjoyed by the audience, and such a lesson, we may add, should prove invaluable to vocal students present.

There was also truth in the following lines from another pen that appeared at about the same time in the same journal:

The tones that had so long enraptured the musical public were found as bright and rich as ever. What if the extreme notes be not so elastic or ready at command as they once were, what if the daring flights of vocalisation be less spontaneous, there is surely compensation afforded in the increase of volume, in the ripe mellowness of the middle and lower registers. In the melody, "Spargi d'amor il pianto," the prima donna showed that she is now in full possession of those artistic qualities which have gained her wide-world renown. Again, in the aria, "O luce di quest' anima," Mme. Patti displayed that winning grace, that eloquent charm, which has heretofore distinguished her singing.

And all those qualities were to endure to the end. Notably, the exquisite roundness, the sympathetic musical timbre of the medium and chest tones, were to remain in undiminished beauty and opulence so long as the voice itself lasted. For it was never to be said by living soul that Patti was heard to sing when her voice had lost its sweetness and charm. Like its possessor, it never betrayed the meaning of the term "old age."

How this miracle of preservation was accomplished will

by now have been made more or less comprehensible to the reader of these pages. Patti once told the "secret" of it herself in America, after she had been singing in public more than fifty years, to Mr. William Armstrong, who reproduced her words in an article entitled "Mme. Patti's Advice to Singers: Her Own Rules for Preserving the Voice."[1] They were not, perhaps, her *ipsissima verba;* but unquestionably they embodied with accuracy the thoughts and ideas that she uttered in her interview with the magazine writer. Apart from that, they contain such sound common sense, so many valuable hints to vocal students for all time, that I gladly avail myself of the permission granted me to quote the whole article in these pages. It runs thus:

"MME. PATTI'S ADVICE TO SINGERS"

People who cultivate the voice have widely different ideas on what constitutes the best methods of its preservation. If I gave lessons, I should cultivate the middle tones, and the voice of the singer would be good at the age of a hundred. The whole harm to a voice comes in pushing it up and down, in trying to add notes to its compass.

"How high can you sing?" appears to be the question. But what about the foundation part of the voice—that is, the middle notes? My success is founded on those notes, and there can be no enduring success without them. How many can sing very high and yet cannot sing 'Home, sweet home'! Some pooh-pooh the idea of the difficulty of that simple melody. But it is more difficult to sing 'Home, sweet home' than the waltz song from "Romeo and Juliet," because of its demands upon the development of the voice. Without the beautiful middle notes there is no cantabile, and upon the proper

[1] Dictated by Mme. Patti to William Armstrong, and revised by her for publication in the *Saturday Evening Post* (Philadelphia) and subsequently in the Christmas number of the *Windsor Magazine*, 1903. Reprinted here by kind permission of the editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*.

development of these, and the avoidance of strain by forcing high and low notes, the enduring powers of the singer depend.

High gymnastics are very beautiful; but, lose the middle notes, and you lose all. The very high and the very low notes are the ornaments, but what good are Gobelins and pictures if you have no house to hang them in?

The tremolo, one of the most objectionable and unbearable of vocal faults, is but a phase of this forcing, and comes of the spreading of the vocal cords through straining.

How often the question has been put to me: "Mme. Patti, how high can you sing?" and I have thought: "Are you at it, too?" The middle voice is the one that you need to sing with. I sing comfortably.

If you want to sing for years, do not strain the natural compass of the voice. That is like living on capital. I have always lived within my income, and I have always had something to put aside.

The question of success or failure as a singer is simplified by self-judgment and discrimination. Many voices are not worth the cultivation, and that means time and opportunities lost. Very often students wear out their voices with over-study before they appear in public. They destroy the freshness of the voice by singing too much.

As to the length of time to be devoted to study, I myself do not give more than fifteen or twenty minutes to it daily, and these few minutes I devote to scales. . . .

My golden rule in singing is to spare myself until the voice is needed, and then never to give it all out. Put it in the bank. I do not push my voice for the pleasure of the moment. If you are prodigal of your powers at such times, the next time you wish to be generous you cannot.

"The true secret of preserving the voice is not to force it and not to sing when one ought not to." We have seen how she broke the latter half of her golden rule when she sang for Mr. Kuhe at the Albert Hall; but she had naturally forgotten that exceptional episode when "dictating" to Mr. Armstrong fourteen years later, for to him she said:

I never sang when I was not well enough; neither did I sing when I was doubtful of the condition of my voice. I simply went to bed and said that there was "no one in." Managers came, besought, pleaded, and entreated; but I was not well and I would not sing.

One instance I remember well when it proved most difficult to refuse. The King of Prussia, later the German Emperor William I, had arranged a court concert in which I was to sing. Although everything had been prepared at the palace, when the day arrived I did not feel well, and refused to go. To Meyerbeer was given the unpleasant task of conveying my refusal. But the King did not resent it, for he came to hear me when I next appeared. During the performance he asked:

"Miss Patti, what caused you to be so ill?"

"Your royal climate, your Majesty," was my reply.

In the matter of diet and its relation to the voice, I can only say that I have been able to eat and drink in moderation anything I like. During a performance I do not take anything, unless it may be a little chicken soup; nor at such times do I feel like eating. Eating after singing I consider injurious, for one is then always more or less fatigued. . . . I have always avoided suppers at home in the middle of the night; late suppers disagree with me.

So far as denying myself is concerned, I have not found the slightest difficulty in giving up anything that it is unwise to indulge in. At one time I dieted for four years. That was, however, not due to the demands of my voice. . . . There is nothing like fresh air and exercise for keeping the voice in good order.

When a singer is about to enter upon a public career, there is one point to be considered—that of fitness for concert or opera. I think if you can sing in concert, if you have feeling and discernment, you can sing in opera, though in my opinion some who are good in concert are by no means fitted for opera. The operatic stage demands so much of everything—voice, knowledge of singing, and acting. Everything has to be calculated; even a wrong step or two during a phrase will bring one into the wings instead of to the front of the stage. Ease of movement, dramatic instinct and feeling, are absolutely necessary to the opera singer. . . .

Another most important gift, and one quite indispensable to suc-

cess in opera, is presence of mind; for on the stage it is always the unexpected that happens. In my early career I knew no such thing as nervousness. I had nothing to lose then. But later it was different. When I had made my reputation, I grew more and more nervous, for it is one thing to build up a reputation and another to sustain it. Not alone on the stage, but in the auditorium, incidents are continually arising that demand of a singer an absolute self-control, command of memory, and vocal powers in the face of distractions and of danger.

On the very night of my operatic début something of this kind occurred. I sang the title part in Donizetti's "Lucia," with Brignoli as *Edgardo*. A man had hung his coat carelessly over the front of the gallery, and a pistol in the pocket went off in the middle of the performance. For an instant everyone stopped still on the stage; then we went ahead again, and the audience was reassured.

Another accident, more serious in the possibility of its consequences, happened at Bucharest. A man had climbed upon the irons at the side of the stage to get sight of me. He slipped and fell on a poor woman who was standing in the wings. She was badly hurt, and her cries resounding through the house caused someone to call "Fire!" In an instant the excitable audience was in a panic. The thought flashed through my mind that a stampede for the doors might bring death to hundreds. "It is no fire!" I called. "It is nothing!" And I continued singing the cadenza with flute accompaniment in "Lucia." After I had sung a few bars the audience was quieted.

Another time, in Vienna, I was again singing in "Lucia," and had just begun the cadenza with the flute, in the Mad Scene, when my long, flimsy sleeve caught fire in the gas. Without stopping, I tore it off and finished the aria. But that time, after I got behind the scenes and everything was over, I fainted.

On another occasion, in San Francisco, a man threw a bomb, which exploded on the stage. The audience rose in terror, and, fearing a panic might ensue, I stepped to the front of the stage and began singing "Home, sweet home." The audience resumed their seats, and after a few bars quiet was restored.

Two more instances of Mme. Patti's presence of mind

under trying circumstances conclude this interesting and authentic article. The first seems to suggest at least one disadvantage due to her habit of not attending rehearsals. The second does the same, while also illustrating her considerate nature in not disclosing the identity of the unfortunate tenor concerned:

Once I was singing in "Lucia" with a tenor as *Edgardo* whom I had never seen. As *Edgardo* and his brother are dressed alike in the first scene, when I appeared on the stage I did not know which one I was to sing to. Already my music was sounding from the orchestra. "Which is *Edgardo?*" I asked hastily.

"The one to the left," was the answer. And I hurried toward him, singing as I went.

In an episode of a different description the opera was "Traviata," and the tenor a forgetful one. In the duet in the last act he suddenly began to sing my part. In a flash I had to take up his until, as suddenly, his memory returned. When the curtain was rung down he thanked me with tears in his eyes. It was the second incident of the kind that had happened to him, and the first had not been so fortunate for both singers.

The "longevity of Patti's voice" is the subject of some interesting analysis in a book by another American writer, Mr. Henry Finck, which appeared some few years after the above article was published.[1] In the main he attributed the so-called "secret" to the same causes as did the singer herself. He gives her no credit, however, for having helped to preserve her voice by singing only music that lay well within her means. On the contrary, he complains that there was a time when she attempted tasks that were too heavy for her; and then proceeds to defend her for having—as certain critics averred—confined herself, "especially in the last two decades of her stage career, to the old-fashioned prima donna

[1] "Success in Music and How it is Won," by Henry T. Finck. London, 1910. See Appendix X.

operas." He adds simply, "She was wise in doing what she could do best."

The question is, did Mme. Patti sing these operas toward the end because she had only then recognized her physical limitations as an artist, or because she desired to do the work that caused her least fatigue? If the "two decades" be cut down to one, the latter reason could be the only true reason. Before 1885—and she was to make her final appearance at Covent Garden in 1895—she had not begun to eliminate any of the heavier rôles that had long been in her répertoire: for example, *Marguerite, Leonora,* and *Valentina,* in which Mr. Finck says he liked her less than many less famous singers. She also continued to sing for a time *Aïda, Semiramide, Juliette,* and (to the very last) *Violetta,* which belong neither to the light nor heavy but to the *mezzo carattere* type of soprano parts.

Her ability to do justice to such characters as *Valentina* and *Leonora* was admitted as far back as the season of 1860 in New Orleans, when she was a girl of seventeen. But she was allowed to sing them very seldom. Mr. Finck may be right when he pays a higher tribute to the natural endowments that made her "the Paganini of vocal virtuosity"—an expression applied to her by Lenz—than to her talents as a dramatic singer. He is right when he declares that "she was perfection itself, both as actress and singer, in light comic rôles." But he speaks of "a time when a misdirected ambition made her regard her specialty almost with contempt and aspire to things that were beyond her." When was this? The fact is that she had from the outset loved to show herself a versatile artist. And the unanimous verdict of the world (including New York) had sufficiently proved the accuracy of her estimate—bar the one isolated instance of *Carmen.*

The same author quotes seriously a half-jocular remark that Adelina, when a young woman, once made to Edward

Hanslick. "I am no *buffa,*" she said, tossing her head; and when he praised her *Zerlina,* she retorted: "I would rather sing *Donna Anna,* and I shall sing her yet!" Needless to say, she never fulfilled her threat. It would have been very amusing, doubtless, but she never made mistakes of that sort.

That she knew her own limitations perfectly is further shown in her having consistently refused to sing the operas of Wagner. Some one, quoted by Mr. Finck, once attributed to her what he rightly terms a "silly remark" to the effect that "she would sing Wagner's music after she had lost her voice." Of course she never can have said anything so nonsensical, so lacking in good taste. For she had grown extremely fond of Wagner's music and (after her marriage to Baron Cederström) was a frequent visitor to Bayreuth. Moreover, as we shall see, she took the pains to master the music and German text of the song, "Träume," Elizabeth's "Prayer," and Elsa's "Dream," and sang the first two pieces in public several times. But the operas she was too wise ever to think of attempting.

One more point, in conclusion. After delivering judgment upon Patti as a dramatic singer, Mr. Finck proceeds to tell his readers why she was not one: "Her failure to reach a high level in dramatic rôles was a matter partly of temperament, partly of intellectual laziness." [1] To support this isolated opinion he has recourse to her old friend Arditi—Arditi, of all men, a rare authority upon matters of intellect! From this source he gathers, first, that she did not marry the Marquis de Caux for love, and on that account presumably had "no depth of feeling"; secondly, that Arditi had "never perceived in Adelina the least interest in the higher problems of mankind—in science, politics, religion, not even in *belles lettres.*" [2]

[1] "Success in Music."

[2] "My Reminiscences," by Luigi Arditi.

It would have been more to the point had Arditi mentioned the particular occasions when *he* talked about these things. One would have greatly liked to be present when the genial conductor started a discussion—at Craig-y-Nos or anywhere else—upon such profound topics. He is made to say in his book that "he could not interest Mme. Patti in the lightest of all forms of intellectual exercise—novel-reading." Did he really try? Was he himself capable of trying? There were others who knew her positively to be a voracious reader of good fiction, particularly French.

Arditi was much nearer the mark when he said that at the period during which she was the wife of the Marquis de Caux "she knew not love, the 'grand passion.'" But the Patti of the next twenty years was very different alike as an artist and as a woman. Few critics, even in America, would then have confirmed Mr. Finck's poor estimate of her as a singer of dramatic rôles. Happily, she knew better than to expect to be considered a great tragic artist. She claimed only to be adjudged a versatile and progressive one.

CHAPTER XVII

Craig-y-Nos and Its Châtelaine—Preparing to Entertain—Her Annual Concerts for Local Charities—Her Rule about Singing Gratuitously: Patti's Reasons and Jenny Lind's—Ceremonial Visits to Swansea, Neath, or Brecon; Municipal and Musical Honors—The New "Patti Theatre"; Why and How It Was Built—Opera and Pantomime at Home—The Inaugural Festivities—A Notable House-Party—Personal Impressions of a First Visit to Craig-y-Nos—The Diva as a Hostess and *en Famille*—Her Household in the Nineties—Arditi Superintends Rehearsals—Formal Opening of the Theatre—William Terriss "Deputizes" for Irving—Patti and Nicolini Renew Old Triumphs—Two Memorable Operatic Entertainments and a Ball—The Miracle of Perennial Youthfulness

THE early part of 1891 was uneventful. A concert tour on the Continent, begun at Berlin, was to have filled in the January and February; but, owing to a disagreement with the Russian impresario, it was not extended to St. Petersburg and Moscow, and the journey had to be brought to an abrupt conclusion. From the Prussian capital Mme. Patti went direct to Nice, where she remained until March. On her return she sang two or three times at the Albert Hall, assisted at one concert by the perennial Sims Reeves, whose soft, dark tones and smooth *legato* still sounded surprisingly well in the vast auditorium. At another the supporting talent comprised such artists as Antoinette Sterling, Foli, Paderewski, Johannes Wolff, and Joseph Hollman—a notable ensemble.

Meanwhile, at home in the pretty castle in the Swansea Valley, important events were preparing. The finishing touches were being put to the private theatre—the Patti Theatre, as it was to be called—recently added to the new wing. Its inauguration in the month of August was to be the occa-

sion of festivities on an extensive scale. A large number of friends and well-known people were to be invited for the principal function, while several house-parties were to follow. I had the privilege of being included among the former; and this was to be my first visit to Craig-y-Nos Castle. Needless to say, my desire to see the place was heightened by curiosity regarding the ceremonial that I was bidden at the same time to attend. Indeed, thanks to the newspapers, a considerable amount of public interest in the affair had been aroused beforehand.

Before coming to the incidents connected with the "opening" of the theatre, we shall do well to devote a few moments to a glance at the conditions that were now reigning at Craig-y-Nos; at the influences they had wrought in the home life—nay, in the very habits and customs—of its mistress; and, most of all, what they had done to create in her a recognition of duty to the people among whom she had cast her domestic lot.

Truth to tell, during her residence in South Wales Mme. Patti-Nicolini had deserved well of her neighbors. She had done the things that were calculated to make her popular for her own sake. Without entertaining lavishly, she and her husband had been hospitable and had earned an honorable name in the locality for deeds of charity and open-handed generosity. When the inhabitants of the Swansea Valley spoke of her, it was not merely to refer to the renowned singer, but to the Lady Bountiful of Craig-y-Nos—the kind friend of all the folk, great and small, who came within the growing sphere of her activities.

In a geographical sense, this remote corner of the principality may be roughly defined as a triangle, with the flourishing port of Swansea as its apex and the inland towns of Neath and Brecon at the respective extremities of its base.

The Craig-y-Nos estate is situated rather nearer to these last two places. But Swansea is only twenty-two miles away, and in its vicinity lived Mme. Patti's earliest Welsh friends, including among others Sir Hussey Vivian, Bt., M.P., who represented the borough in Parliament until he became Lord Swansea. Hence her particular interest in these three towns; and hence also her decision, soon after she came here to live, that she would give an annual concert at each town in turn, the profits of which should be devoted to local charities.

The idea was new to her. For many reasons, the name of Patti had not hitherto been much identified with the cause of charity. One of the traits instilled into her by the careful training of Maurice Strakosch had been a capacity for refusing to give her services for nothing. Early experience in Great Britain had shown that it was not advisable for an artist who valued her peace of mind to acquire a reputation for readily consenting to appear at benefit entertainments. The demands made upon her during her first few London seasons had been unconscionable, and she had been obliged to make it a rule to say "No" to all alike.

The drawing of this hard-and-fast line naturally made her many enemies. She was accused of being uncharitable and devoid of generous feeling; which was unjust, because it was untrue, as she abundantly proved in after years. What alternative was there for a young prima donna who was a popular idol, seeing that consent in a solitary instance would have involved consent in hundreds of cases? She was not only perfectly within her right, but, at the time Strakosch established the rule for her, it was undoubtedly a wise and proper course to pursue.

As a matter of fact, long before the Great War came to impose its special needs, the custom of calling upon musical and dramatic celebrities to work in aid of public charities had been overdone to a lamentable extent. Singers used to

CRAIG-Y-NOS CASTLE, MME. PATTI'S WELSH HOME

be invariably paid, and well paid, for their services at provincial festivals; but a good percentage of the thousands of pounds that they earned for other "benefit" undertakings was virtually extracted from their pockets.

This many of them did not mind. The case of Jenny Lind naturally occurs to memory. It should not be forgotten, however, that it was in the latter part of her meteoric public career that the great Swedish artist so generously devoted her energies to singing on behalf of deserving charities—notably those in which she was directly interested or that bore her name. Nothing could have been more admirable. Nevertheless, her noble example ought not to have constituted a reproach for every successful artist who failed to imitate it. If it did so for many years in regard to Adelina Patti, it was because people did not stop to consider that at the time the circumstances in which she was placed were altogether exceptional. Besides, she was a much younger woman than Mme. Jenny Lind-Goldschmidt.

After she had lived a short time in Wales, Mme. Patti's ideas on this subject began to undergo modification. Some one suggested to her that it might be the right thing to organize an occasional concert of her own—engaging the hall and paying the other artists herself—on behalf of one of the local charities. Accordingly, in 1882 the experiment was tried at Swansea, and proved an immense success, the handsome sum of £830 being realized for the funds of the Swansea General Hospital. South Wales was duly grateful, while the rest of the country approved with a polite "Better late than never!"[1]

[1] See Appendix Y, an article describing how these affairs were started, from the *Cambrian* of August 15, 1884. The local historian recounts his story with truly Welsh picturesque fervor and no little humor. He depicts in accurate fashion the hesitancy that was felt on one hand by the new tenant of Craig-y-Nos Castle and, on the other, by the good

Once started, the concerts were given with tolerable regularity—in alternate years at Swansea and Neath, also occasionally at Brecon. The net profits amounted on an average to £700 or £800, and various institutions benefited in turn: the Swansea Hospital, the Brecon Infirmary, the Rest Convalescent Home for the Poor at Porthcawl, the Patti Poor Funds at Neath and Brecon, etc.

A royal visit could not have been attended with greater ceremony than marked the arrival and departure of Mme. Patti and Signor Nicolini on these occasions. The town would be decorated with flags and a holiday proclaimed. Crowds would line the streets and bestow an enthusiastic welcome upon the radiant diva as she drove (sometimes with military escort) to and from the railway station. The Mayor and Corporation, accompanied (for several years) by Sir Hussey Vivian, met her in each town and presented an address in orthodox civic fashion. Generally, too, there was a public luncheon before the concert (which the singers, of course, dared not thoroughly enjoy), at which speeches were delivered that brimmed over with touching sentiment. Then there was the vote of thanks at the close of the concert, usually proposed (at Swansea) by Sir Hussey, an adept at turning neat compliments, and responded to on behalf of Mme. Patti and her husband (who would consent to sing, but not to speak) by either Mr. Augustus Spalding or Mr. Wilhelm Ganz, the latter of whom for many years arranged the programmes and played the accompaniments.

Thus, for close upon a decade, the petted songstress of the Old and New Worlds had been spending the happiest moments of her existence within the confines of that remote bower whither she had erstwhile repaired for quiet and repose. By

people of Glamorganshire, prior to the breaking of the ice and the establishment of "friendly relations."

degrees the well-guarded and almost inaccessible diva had become accustomed to descending, as she set foot here, from her lofty eminence in the realms of opera until she had become transformed into the simple country dame. As such, or rather as a novel and delightful combination of hostess and artist, was she to present herself to the friends who came at her bidding,—most of them, like the writer, for the first time, —penetrating the interior of the shrine that was now her pleasure and her pride.

Obviously the new theatre was its chief jewel. She had taken the utmost pains to have it made, internally at least, a thing of beauty; she had not spared money over the auditorium and the stage, albeit the extreme plainness of its exterior might bear comparison on a small scale with that notoriously ugly edifice, the Bayreuth Theatre. However, it did not, like the Wagner temple, stand alone upon an exposed acclivity. It formed part of the castle building, which itself could lay no special claim to architectural beauty; and one only noticed it as a squat and substantial portion of what we now knew as the "new wing." It had been designed by a local architect and erected by a Swansea builder.

Oblong in shape and capable of seating about three hundred people, the auditorium at once struck the spectator as cosy and comfortable. The decorative scheme was simple but attractive. The walls were divided into arabesqued panels of pale blue, cream, and gold between fluted pillars in similar coloring, the whole effect being extremely light and delicate. The orchestra "pit," which would hold about twenty performers, could when necessary be raised to the height of the floor. The entire floor, again, could also be raised by mechanical means from its slight gradient, or "rake," until entirely level, the whole auditorium being thus converted into a handsome ball-room. The stage was of fair size and fitted with the latest appliances for lighting and scene-shifting.

The acoustics were excellent, and from the gallery at the back one could see and hear everything to perfection.

Such was the *bijou* theatre that the illustrious opera-singer had added to the many luxuries of her Welsh dwelling, and which was to constitute so prominent and enjoyable a feature in the home existence of her declining years. A plaything? No, not by any means; it was a good deal more than that. It was to replace something that the artist—still bubbling over with the active spirit and physical energy of a juvenility which her looks did not belie—now felt to be gradually slipping from her grasp. That something was opera—her beloved *scène lyrique*—the real theatre whose boards she had lightly and joyfully trodden for thirty years. She could not bear to let it go out of her life.

A plaything? No. When a child of four or five she had loved her dolls with an ardent devotion that well-nigh patterned the maternal. That early passion had endured long after the little girl was earning the family living; long after she had reached her teens; nay, after she had actually attained womanhood. But there were two things for which the child would always gladly leave her dolls. One was to "dress up" and play at acting; the other, to go to the opera—to the theatre where artists acted as well as sang.

"I am never so happy," she once said to me, "as when I am on the stage. It is then that I feel the truest and strongest inspiration. It is then that I give of my best. Not merely because of the freedom to couple action and movement with my singing, but because of the thought that I am depicting personages, incidents, emotions, all of which I can supplement with facial look and gesture.

"I love the art of pantomime. I love to go through a scene and represent a character where there is neither singing nor speaking; only to feel and understand what I have

to express, and carry it out by sheer acting, that is, with attitude, *geste,* glance of the eye, pointing of the hand or a finger. I can do that without using my voice, and yet I can still have music to aid and inspire me. For pantomime carried on without music means nothing; you cannot separate one from the other."

Here, when all was said and done, emerged the true reason for the existence of the new theatre. Not a plaything was it to be, but a hobby; and a very artistic one. It would have been easy enough for Mme. Patti to cling to her stage work all through this period, had she desired. In London the renascence of opera under Augustus Harris had already started with the Covent Garden season of 1888. The leading capitals of Europe were ever ready to welcome her the moment she cared to say the word. It would be only a question of terms.

But on that very question obstacles would have arisen; for the diva, much as she loved the stage, was growing tired of the strenuous labor of operatic life, and she felt no inducement to reduce her fees to the old European level. Not an impresario among them would venture to offer her the *cachet* that she received from Mr. Percy Harrison or Mr. Kuhe for singing three airs and as many encores at a concert.

She preferred, therefore, to accept easy and lucrative engagements like these, with perhaps one or two more visits to America, should opportunity occur. But henceforth the only theatre she would take delight in would be her own, where she could select her own piece and her own public, where she could be her own *intendant, impresa, prima donna assoluta,* and *première mime,* all in one!

I arrived at Craig-y-Nos Castle four days before the inaugural performance, which had been fixed for August 12, 1891. The house-party had already begun to assemble, and

comprised some notable people. Among them were the then Spanish Ambassador, besides Sir Hussey and Lady Vivian, Baron and Baroness Julius de Reuter, Mr. Edward Lawson (afterwards Sir Edward and later still the first Lord Burnham), the Comte de Lille, Mr. Augustus Spalding, Mr. William Beatty Kingston (of the *Daily Telegraph*), M. Thomas Johnson (of *Le Figaro*), Signor and Mme. Arditi, three or four operatic artists, Mr. Percy Harrison, and other friends. On the eve of the 12th the castle was as packed as a grouse shooting-box on one of the neighboring moors. Its sleeping accommodation was so overtaxed that the dressing-rooms behind the theatre had been turned into bedrooms.

There were two disappointments. Mr. Alfred de Rothschild was unable to come, and Henry Irving could not keep his promise to deliver the inaugural address and declare the theatre open. The eminent tragedian had, however, asked his popular *jeune premier*, William Terriss, to come in his stead; and a hearty welcome awaited the cheery actor, whose premature death at the hand of a cowardly assassin we were soon afterward to deplore. The long address had been written by Beatty Kingston. How poor Terriss arrived only a couple of hours before it was to be delivered, without knowing a word of it, and how he mastered every line with astounding rapidity—a prodigious feat of memory, in fact—shall be duly related.

Before dealing with the *première* itself, let me here set down a few impressions of this now historical place as it struck me on the occasion of my interesting initial visit. To begin with, there was the extreme difficulty of getting there. Journeying from Paddington to the Swansea Valley by way of Neath, over three lines of railway, not only took best part of a day, but evidently meant, as a regular thing, arriving at the castle late for dinner. Yet, curiously enough, I was to

note that the host and hostess were invariably less surprised by the unpunctual advent of their guests than if they happened to dwell with any emphasis upon the tediousness or fatigue of the journey. The simple explanation of this was that Mme. Patti herself travelled to and from town either by special train or in a through saloon carriage. It probably never occurred to her that the Swansea Valley was an awkward place to get to—for people making the trip under less favorable conditions.

But one quickly forgot the inconveniences of the journey after alighting at the little Penwyllt station which stood perched almost above the Craig-y-Nos. One felt at once, so to speak, in the domain of the diva herself. On the arrival platform was her private waiting-room, erected by the railway company with as much solid material as if it had been intended for Queen Victoria and her successors. Outside the station began Mme. Patti's own private road, cut into the steep hillside at a gentle gradient, and leading down into the broad Swansea Valley, where it joined the regular highway winding up from the village of Ystradgynlais to the castle and thence on to Brecon.

The view from the top at Penwyllt is really charming. Hills and moorland stretch as far as the eye can reach, and just below, on the opposite side of the valley, one perceives the castle in its grounds, looking white and cool in the hot August sun, a veritable oasis in the desert. I was one of a contingent of guests from London, and carriages had been sent to meet us. We arrived just as the gong was sounding for dinner. A rush, a hurried change, and almost before I could realize it I was seated beside my hostess at a long table in the huge conservatory which, in the summer, was used as a dining-room. With its innumerable electric lights and its background of lofty palms, it presented a scene of extraordinary beauty.

Vividly do I recall the picture of Mme. Patti herself at the head of the table, looking astonishingly youthful and *svelte* in a Parisian gown of blue and white, just received from Worth or Doucet. Her rippling laugh was rarely unheard, her abundant flow of talk in four languages the life and soul of the conversation. Every now and then she would address a remark in French, with well-nigh ventriloquial skill, to the other end of the table.

"*Ecoute donc,* Ernest," or "*Entends-tu, mon ami?*" And back would come the reply, "*Oui, ma mignonne,*" in the resonant tenor notes of Nicolini, busy with some Italian dish or emptying his own particular bottle of his own special brand of champagne. And so the gorgeous Gargantuan meal went on for the best part of a couple of hours.

This banquet was the beginning of a series of feasts that was to last for days. The hospitality of Craig-y-Nos Castle was already a by-word in the principality. (It reached its climax that summer. Seven years later it had ceased to exist.) Mme. Patti's chef was a genuine *cordon bleu,* and her excellent butler was for the time being assisted by extra footmen. Additional carriages and horses had been brought over from Swansea.

When dinner was over, the men did not remain at the table, but escorted their ladies in procession through the morning-room and hall of the old house to the new wing, and on through the big winter dining-room to the French billiard-room. Here our merry hostess seated herself on one of the raised leather-cushioned *bancs,* surrounded by her feminine guests, and, while coffee was being served, listened to the orchestrion in its pleasing execution of her and her husband's favorite "rolls." The manipulation of the instrument was Nicolini's special duty; he jealously reserved it, in fact, for himself, as if no one else could be trusted to put on or take

off a roll. He was now no longer a smoker, but knew well the qualities of the different brands of cigars stocked in his cabinet; and happily he always took care that I should have one of his "Alfred de Rothschilds."

Now was the moment when plans for the following day were to be talked over, when arrangements for final stage rehearsals were discussed. Maestro Arditi was called to the front.

"*Caro Luigi,*" cried the gracious Adelina, "do you want me to-morrow?"

"I t'ink is better," smiled Arditi. "*Veramente* I like you rehearse twice, if is possible. I want 'Traviata' before lunch, 'Faust' after lunch. E-e-eh?" The sly old conductor was laughing inwardly. He knew he could make her do here something that in an ordinary opera house she would not have done for a thousand pounds. She pretended to hesitate.

"*Mais ça, c'est terrible!* And with piano only?"

"You know my orchestra he not come from Swansea till nex' day; Mr. Hulley he bring 'eem with the chorus. *Domani* is principals; *e senza di te non va!*" This with an indescribable imploring grimace.

"Very well; I suppose I must. *C'est entendu.* And now let us all go and look at the theatre.

She led the way by a short corridor that went direct from the billiard-room to the narrow vestibule of the new structure, access to which was also available by an entrance from the outer quadrangle of the castle. The corridor continued on to the dressing-rooms at the back of the stage; but to the left about half-way was a door that opened direct into the auditorium, now brilliantly lighted as if for a performance.

It looked wonderfully pretty—very spick and span, of course, as if just lifted out of a bandbox, but quite harmonious with its color scheme of pale blue, white, and gold. The act drop was down. It was a miniature masterpiece

from the brush of Hawes Craven, the central figure an Amazonian personage in a Roman chariot driving a pair of fiery steeds. The costume, however, was that of *Semiramide*, and the face an excellent likeness of Mme. Patti herself.

I glanced at the original. She looked proud and happy, and I told her she had good reason to feel so. A private theatre on such a scale was unique—something that the Queen of England herself did not possess.

"I am so glad you like it," she said. "It has been a great pleasure to build it; but the best is now to come. I know how I shall enjoy singing and acting in it for my friends. I wish it were already the day after to-morrow." (This was Monday. The opening was fixed for the Wednesday.) And she clapped her hands in joyful anticipation, just like an impatient child; which was precisely what Adelina Patti most resembled at that particular moment.

No one was supposed to go into the theatre during the rehearsals, but on the second day I contrived to obtain admission as a privileged person, though for a few minutes only. I found every one taking the work *au grand sérieux*. Arditi was as solemn as if he were at Covent Garden, Nicolini perhaps even more so. The others followed suit.

Mme. Patti entered into the spirit of the thing with the greater zest because until now the tedious and hard work of rehearsing had been so completely unknown to her. Now, of course, it was a labor of love. The traditional "business" of scenes from "Traviata" and "Faust" might be old as the hills, but the experience of trying it over on one's own stage, under one's own roof, was delightfully new. A few days later she was to find it still more fascinating, for then strange parts and an unaccustomed art had to be studied. Then, in her estimation, rehearsals became the most enjoyable feature of the proceedings.

Meanwhile the remainder of the house-party were rapidly arriving, and Tuesday was a day of busy preparation. The Spanish Ambassador proved to be a courteous and amiable gentleman. He was guilty of one charming piece of flattery. Naturally, he claimed the diva as his compatriot. She admitted the soft impeachment, then asked him, "But don't you think I should have been exactly like I am, wherever I was born?" Said his Excellency in reply: "You might have been an equally great singer, but you would not have been the same *grande dame d'Espagne.*"

Mr. Edward Lawson, always the essence of *bonhomie*, was there as one of her oldest friends, and anxious only on one point—the difficulty of transmitting in good time a worthy account of the opening performance to his paper, the *Daily Telegraph*. It was to be written by Beatty Kingston, which insured a notice of "heavenly length," bristling with any quantity of flowery adjectives. But the nearest telegraph office was at Ystradgynlais, a village several miles away, and every message to or from that office had to be sent over a defective telephone of the early days, situated in a small room on the first floor of the castle. Nevertheless, when the time came, I managed to get it through, and the proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph* was very grateful. I took good care, however, to get off my own notice to the *Manchester Guardian* first, so as not to block the line for the London message.[1]

William Terriss arrived on the 12th soon after tea, and at once set to work to memorize the address already referred to. As a very old friend my services were requisitioned by him as prompter. We went together to his room, and he gave me an object-lesson in the art of "quick study." He took one copy of the address; I took another. He read it through to me; I read it through to him. He began repeat-

[1] My article for the *Sunday Times* (see Appendix Z) went later by post.

ing sentences by heart; I prompted him and corrected mistakes. In about three quarters of an hour he was word-perfect. At night, as the actors say, he may have been nervous; but he made only one or two tiny slips, and those were not observed even by the quizzical author of the address.

When he came before the plush tableau curtains, Terriss found himself face to face with a strange audience and in an atmosphere of suppressed excitement. One could have heard a pin drop. Poor fellow, he would have preferred to confront an agitated Drury Lane crowd or a seething Adelphi pit rather than this select gathering of Mme. Patti's friends—residents, most of them, from the Swansea Valley and places within a radius of twenty-five or thirty miles. Behind the curtain, too, the entire company had assembled, with the radiant *Violetta* herself at their head, to listen to the delivery of the lines that were, so to speak, to set the machinery in motion. Indeed, an air of impatient expectancy reigned everywhere. Greater anxiety that the representation should go without a hitch could not have been manifested at Covent Garden on a gala night.

Amid the hush that succeeded a rapturous welcome, William Terriss spoke as follows:

"Ladies and Gentlemen: I stand here as the humble and inadequate representative of the first of living English actors. It had been the intention of Mr. Henry Irving to signalize his appreciation of Mme. Adelina Patti's transcendent talent as singer and actress, and to mark his strong sense of the close alliance connecting the musical and dramatic arts, by speaking a few inaugural words on this occasion—one that is unique in operatic and theatrical annals alike. For we are met here to be present at an initial performance held in a theatre which, at the generous behest of the Queen of Song, has been erected and provided with every mechanical appli-

ance perfected by modern science in the very heart of a wild Welsh valley, teeming with the beauties of nature, but remote from the busy haunts of men.

"As far as Mr. Irving is concerned, circumstances have intervened rendering his personal participation in to-night's celebration impracticable. He has, however, empowered me to act as his envoy, and I have been accepted in that character for the performance of this agreeable and sympathetic duty by our gracious and gifted hostess, the châtelaine of Craig-y-Nos—the good fairy who haunts the "Rock of the Night"—the true friend of the poor, whose benefactions have for a dozen years past ripened unnumbered throughout the length and breadth of this picturesque region.

"In this beautiful theatre, dedicated to the allied arts and adorned with the counterfeit presentments of great musicians and dramatists, you will this evening be privileged to listen to that incomparable voice which ever binds its hearers in a spell of wonder and delight. I will not retard your supreme enjoyment by further dilating on the attractions of that which you have eyes to see and ears to hear, but will conclude my grateful task by declaring the Patti Theatre open for the late summer season of 1891."

When William Terriss had retired, amid renewed applause, Signor Arditi at once raised his baton, and the capital little orchestra from Swansea gave out the delicate violin passage that starts the most touching and pathetic of all Verdi's preludes. This was the programme:

LA TRAVIATA—Act I.

Violetta Valéry	Mme. Adelina Patti-Nicolini.
Alfredo Germont.	Mr. Durward Lely.
Flora Bervoix	Miss Ellen Flynn.

Gastone . . . . . Mr. Reginald Brophy.
Marchese . . . . . Mr. Edwin Ball.
Barone. . . . . Mr. E. Jones.
Chorus: St. David's Amateur Operatic Society.
Entr'acte, Morceau à la Gavotte, "L'Ingénue" (Arditi).

FAUST—Act III (Garden Scene).

Faust . . . . . Signor Nicolini.
Mephistopheles . . . . . Signor Novara.
Margherita . . . . . Mme. Adelina Patti-Nicolini.
Siebel . . . . . } Mme. Giulia Valda.
Marta . . . . . }
"God Save the Queen."

It was a performance replete with singular interest. Not on account of any remarkable merit in the ensemble, nor even such value as would have attached to the rendering of an entire opera. But simply on account of the *locale* and the presence and coöperation of the artist who was its "bright particular star." It was merely a *spectacle coupé* on a small scale; but its very *intimité*—to employ the expressive French word—lent a novel charm to this manifestation of a genius that had hitherto unfolded its powers exclusively for paying multitudes. It was therefore an entirely new experience, and at the time, I admit, rather hard to appraise in its full significance.

The old opera habitué, Augustus Spalding, was sitting next me. During our chat between the acts he spoke a true word: "She will think more of the applause of her friends to-night than she ever thought of that which she received in the opera house."

I asked him, "Do you think she has ceased to care for public applause?"

"I don't believe she ever set great store upon it. She has

taken it as a matter of course. The adulation and cheers of the people have been ringing in her ears ever since she can remember. It was not for lack of applause that she put up this theatre. Having the secret of eternal youth, she wants to go on enjoying her art in her own fashion. She is anxious now to please her friends. She believes their admiration to be genuine and it is dear to her because she is personally acquainted with the owner of every pair of hands that is clapping her."

If it be true that applause is "the breath of life to the artist," we had no farther to seek for an explanation of the evergreen youthfulness of the *Violetta* who had just received her stage guests in the first act of "La Traviata." The comparatively tiny stage did not seem to hamper her movements. One noticed the same freedom, the same *élan,* as of yore, and not a trace of the make-believe that usually destroys all sense of illusion in drawing-room theatricals. The amateurs of the St. David's Operatic Society interested her rather more, apparently, than the average semicircle of Covent Garden choristers. As for her voice, it sounded supremely beautiful in the little auditorium. I never heard her sing "Ah! fors' è lui" with more dazzling brilliancy or greater *aplomb.* The long-sustained trill on the G-A flat during the exit at the end was as birdlike as ever.

The scene from "Faust" went even better, as might have been expected with such an experienced quartet. Nicolini looked surprisingly picturesque, romantic, and lover-like. He still sang like an accomplished artist, too, though his voice was growing harder and his *vibrato* more pronounced. The English basso, Frank Novara, made an excellent *Mephistopheles;* and the American Mme. Valda probably created a record (for the stage) by doubling the parts of *Siebel* and *Martha.* The Garden Scene was, by the way, a replica of the "set" painted

for Irving's Lyceum production of Wills's "Faust." Arditi did wonders with the Swansea orchestra; and the stage lighting was deftly managed by Frank Rigo, who was destined to act as *régisseur* at the castle for many years.

But the miracle that overshadowed all else was the sweet, virginal *Marguerite* of the singer of forty-eight summers, who could cheat us into the belief that she was still the girl depicted by Goethe. I wrote at the time: "It was the triumph of the night which might have been easiest foretold. Her white Gretchen costume became her to perfection, and she made a delicious picture as she sat spinning at her wheel and warbling the 'King of Thule' with the greatest imaginable poetic feeling." More than once one had the impression that the whole thing was a dream. Could this truly be Patti,—the inimitable and adorable songstress worshipped in two hemispheres,—still looking and singing like a maid in her teens and striving her hardest to please on her own twenty-five-by-twenty-five-foot stage down in this remote corner of Wales? It seemed curious and uncanny enough to be unreal; and it gave one "furiously to think."

Then, after the curtain has fallen and the cheers have died away, there occurs another novel precedent. Instead of a muffled figure making a hurried exit through a stage-door, behold the diva, in an evening gown rapidly donned, mingling with her guests in the big conservatory, whither they have now adjourned to greet her before relieving a long buffet of its heavy load. Once more our *Violetta* goes through her "Traviata" business, clinking glasses with us as we toast her in rivers of champagne. Only this time the *brindisi* is not sung by Mr. Durward Lely, of "Mikado-Carmen" fame, but proposed in neat English sentences by Sir Hussey Vivian. The eyes of our hostess sparkle like the wine. The double rôle of *cantatrice* and châtelaine is new to her; one can see that she enjoys playing it.

She was in great spirits that night, and we remained up, talking it all over, until long after the last guest had departed.

Next evening a dance was given in the new theatre, a large party of friends from the neighborhood being again invited. The weather had undergone a change, and the dwellers in the valley journeyed through a thick mist and heavy rain to enjoy the hospitality of the castle. The ingenious mechanism for raising the floor to the level of the stage had been brought into operation. A capital ball-room was the result, and no one revelled more in the inspiration of its well-polished floor than Mme. Patti, who was an insatiable waltzer.

What is more, she waltzed with the true Viennese swing; and, considering how limited was her allowance of physical exercise, it was wonderful how long she could dance without getting tired. I recollect pointing this out to her during a pause after a lengthy spell of Strauss's "Doctrinen." Her comment was characteristic:

"I never had a lesson in ball-room dancing in my life, but I waltz so easily that it never seems to make me out of breath. I must have a good partner, though; otherwise I stop after a few turns. I suppose that when I waltz it comes naturally to me to manage my breathing, as I do when I sing. Take good deep breaths, glide lightly without exertion, don't 'reverse' much, and you can waltz a long while before feeling tired."

Doubtless she was right. It was the breath-control that did it. And this was one of the things that she had acquired without special study, like the singing and the dancing that she associated with it. She had a singular faculty for "picking up" accomplishments. I asked her if she had ever worked seriously at a musical instrument.

"Never, until just lately. I can play the piano, and, as you know, I am very fond of my castanets. I learned also to do a 'roll" on the side-drum for the 'Fille du Régiment.' But recently I have taken a great liking to the zither, and am studying it diligently with a lady who comes down here to give me lessons. It is a charming instrument; don't you think so? And now let us finish our waltz."

It was a tremendously busy week; for after a brief respite on Friday—save a couple of hours devoted to rehearsal—the indefatigable mistress of Craig-y-Nos was again entertaining a crowd of friends in her theatre on Saturday. This time the invitations, being for a matinée, went farther afield, and the little auditorium could scarcely accommodate all who came.

The programme comprised the third act of "Martha" and the Balcony Scene from "Roméo." Both went with unflagging spirit, and Mme. Patti was once more in capital voice. In the spinning quartet her efforts were ably seconded by Mme. Valda, Durward Lely, and Novara. It was, as usual, a treat to hear her exquisite phrasing of the "Last rose of summer," which she sang first in Italian and afterwards in English for the encore. In these simple melodies she was always incomparable, and that day the enthralling loveliness of her tone moved the writer to telegraph to his paper: "Many were present who had heard the illustrious artist in her palmy Covent Garden days, and they were fain to confess that her voice had never sounded more beautiful, had never been used with greater art."

The Balcony Scene furnished another gratifying reminiscence of bygone triumphs; for Nicolini was in his best form, and the two artists, now husband and wife, bridged the intervening seventeen years with surprising ease. "The music of *Juliette* was rendered by Mme. Patti as no other living artist

can render it. Indeed, I think she sang with more passion and grandeur this afternoon than when I heard her last in this character at the Paris Opéra nearly three years ago. Her Welsh friends thoroughly appreciated the privilege and pleasure thus afforded them, and cheered with might and main. In consequence, the curtain was raised again, and, to the general delight, Mme. Patti sang her old friend Arditi's waltz, 'Il Bacio,' giving it with the grace and *entrain* of which she alone is capable.''[1]

And so ended the memorable series of functions that had been planned for the formal inauguration of the Patti Theatre. They were completely successful in that they demonstrated a clear artistic *raison d'être* for what was otherwise no more than an interesting private experiment. There remained to prove that it possessed further value as a convenient *locale* for the exercise of the art of the mime, and evidence of this was not long in coming.

Meantime the house-party broke up. The Spanish Ambassador took his departure, finding, no doubt, a pleasant travelling companion in William Terriss, who distinguished himself, poor fellow, by getting up very early on the morning after the ball (which had been kept up until 4 A. M.) and executing a noisy *pas seul* along the passage outside the bedroom of his hostess—an extremely light sleeper!

Mr. Lawson and Beatty Kingston also went off together, and in a very contented frame of mind; since both had had a thoroughly ''good time'' and had just received copies of the *D.T.* containing the latter's carefully telephoned article. With a few exceptions, the rest of us accepted invitations to make a longer stay. Thereby hangs another tale.

[1] *Sunday Times*, August 15, 1891.

CHAPTER XVIII

Life at Craig-y-Nos in 1891 (*Continued*)—Patti's Vocal Practice and Recreations—A Shooting Incident—Preparations for a Royal Visit—A Pantomime Rehearsal—Prince Henry of Battenberg at the Castle—A Special Performance in the Theatre—Sir Augustus Harris Comes on a Holiday—"La Tosca" as a Wordless Play—A Visit at Christmas, 1892—Patti and the Young Italian School—Bevignani's Revised Version of "Una Voce"—Her Talent for Improvisation—A Tune at Tea-time

MY first week at Craig-y-Nos Castle had convinced me that existence there could be very pleasant, very diverting, and, without a doubt, very strenuous. Nor can I say, in spite of the special nature of the festivities described in the last chapter, that it was lacking, at any time in my experience, in one or other of these particular characteristics. When there were fewer visitors the life was perchance less exciting; but it was always agreeable, and never in the remotest degree dull.

Its strenuousness invariably radiated from the same central source: that is to say, the active brain, the keen, restless spirit of her whom Spalding always called the "little lady." She hated to "sit still and do nothing." Neither during this ultra-busy period nor subsequently did I ever observe in her a tendency to idle minutes away or indulge in long spells of gossip. Conversation with her was not merely lively and edifying, but calculated to keep one wide awake. She could not tolerate indolence of thought or manner in those around her, and when they were capable of ministering to her diversions, she gave them plenty to do. By keeping every one occupied and amused she achieved the same thing for herself.

During the hours of liberty preceding luncheon she would remain in her own apartments, only coming down early enough to take a stroll in the winter garden or (when it was warm enough) on the terrace overlooking the valley. Before doing this she first attended to her correspondence or business affairs and then practised. The length of her practice depended upon what there might be for her to study, if there was anything at all. The morning was not allowed to pass, however, without her working on scales, the shake, and a few cadenzas, these last for the most part improvised. She also devoted a certain amount of time to playing the zither. Day after day, as I paused under her window, I could hear her playing or singing; and it was a delight to listen to the wonderful voice, whatever its theme, as it rang out, clear and resonant, upon the still summer atmosphere of the Welsh hills.

Sometimes it was my good fortune to be her companion during one of her indoor walks—twenty times round the winter garden to a mile, or thereabouts. She would talk freely on any subject that interested her, and showed reticence only when she herself became the topic. For a woman who had been so overladen with praise and flattery of the most undiluted description, I always found her singularly modest when referring to her own career, her own gifts and accomplishments. When I succeeded in turning the conversation toward the past, it would be to elicit her opinions about other celebrities, as they happened to flit across her memory. She had admired some; others not at all; and she did not mind expressing herself without reserve, because, as she often said, "I have confidence in your discretion." That confidence must not be violated now.

As a rule, however, it was concerning the affairs of the day and our projects for mutual entertainment that we talked most during these matutinal strolls. Then would she discuss what was to be done in the theatre and the various

plans for keeping up the "strenuous life." In the morning Nicolini was generally out fishing or shooting; in the afternoon we sometimes went for a drive and paid visits in the neighborhood.

Occasionally, too, when the castle was less full of guests, its mistress would proceed to Ystradgynlais, or some other village near by, on one of her missions of charity. One day she returned bringing with her in the carriage a poor woman whom she had found by the wayside. Shortly afterwards the servants' quarters were resounding to the lusty cries of a new-born babe. The forlorn mother was well cared for and not allowed to depart for several days. But whether the infant was ultimately christened Ernest or Adelina history does not relate.

During this first visit to Craig-y-Nos one did not get much outdoor recreation. A new tennis-lawn had just been laid down, and Mme. Patti came to watch us play the inaugural set. The talent of some of the players was, however, inferior, and the game did not greatly interest her. Hence, probably, the reason why the court was allowed to fall into neglect. I played on it very little, preferring to walk or fish or shoot. The right to indulge in these last two sports was jealously guarded by Nicolini. He allowed me to fish as much as I pleased; but to join him with a gun was a special favor not accorded me until another year. We were now only in August. Nicolini was waiting for the pheasants, which he had reared with the aid of two game-keepers at the end of a large kitchen-garden.

But bringing up pheasants on the premises was a mistake. It once led to trouble. Mme. Patti loved the birds, which were very tame, and took pride in showing them to her friends. She would often feed them herself. Naturally, this caused her to dislike the idea of their being killed, and she made

her husband promise that he would not shoot *at* them within a certain distance of the castle. He tried to keep his word; but on the occasion of our first "shoot" fate and the pheasants were too much for him. We began across the little river in the most distant part of the grounds. He potted a brace; I by great luck, brought off what he termed a *coup royal*, which made him extremely envious. But the birds were not in the least "wild," and, finding themselves attacked so near home, of course made straight for the kitchen-garden.

Nicolini became very excited. Not heeding or understanding his game-keeper's warning, he first fired at the pheasants as they flew toward the castle, then crossed the bridge and began to follow them up. Both proceedings proved disastrous. His tiny leaden shot fell on the glass roof of the conservatory just when Mme. Patti happened to be sitting beneath it, and the noise of the firing coming nearer roused in her not only alarm but anger. The climax arrived when Nicolini got into the kitchen-garden and began aiming at the poor birds there. I think he hit one. What would have happened next I know not, had he not heard his distraught spouse calling to him from the distance. Only then did he hand his gun to the nearest keeper. (I had discreetly given up mine some time before.) Over the domestic sequel to this curious episode I draw a veil.

But to return to the festivities of August, 1891. On the Monday following the opening of the theatre Mme. Patti gave out an interesting bit of news. She expected to be honored with a visit from the late Prince Henry of Battenberg, whose yacht had anchored at the Mumbles off Swansea. He was spending much of his time with Mr. Graham Vivian at Clyne Castle, in the neighborhood of that port. As soon as his Royal Highness fixed the day, she intended to arrange an operatic performance in his honor.

With this in view, the *personnel* was to be retained, as far as circumstances would permit. Novara had already departed, but could be recalled; Mme. Valda had an engagement in Dublin, but would not be allowed to go; Arditi was still at Craig-y-Nos, and the band could be available at very short notice. Luckily, the Prince soon made known his decision. He would pay his promised visit on the following Saturday, coming in time for lunch, then witness the performance in the afternoon and return to Clyne Castle after tea.

Mme. Patti was greatly elated at the idea of entertaining at her Welsh castle a prince so closely allied to the royal family. She knew him to be—what he undoubtedly was—a charming man, and meant that he should thoroughly enjoy himself.

"But what," she asked, "can we do between now and Saturday? We must make use of the theatre and amuse ourselves somehow. Why not get up a pantomime?" The proposition was received with enthusiasm. It was evidently not a new idea among the regular Craig-y-Nos circle, though until now there had been no regular stage for the purpose.

These "mime" or "wordless" plays were of two types, one serious, the other comic. The former was definite and dramatic in action, and performed to a regular descriptive musical setting; like, for instance, the "Enfant Prodigue" of André Wormser, which was just then the rage in Paris and London. The comic type belonged more to the "go-as-you-please" order. Based generally upon some shadowy plot or "Arabian Nights" story, it was acted to haphazard or extemporized music, and allowed ample scope for the exercise of individual humor and fun. It was settled that we should prepare a wordless play of each kind, and do the comic one first, that being much the easier to get up at a day or two's notice.

The direction of this was confided to Augustus Spalding, whose long experience as an amateur actor (he had played for

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years at Windsor and at Canterbury in the Cricket Week) made him invaluable both as principal low comedian and stage-manager. The subject chosen was "Bluebeard." For the serious mime-play Mme. Patti was anxious to have a Sarah Bernhardt part. I suggested "La Tosca." After a little consideration, she decided upon Sardou's play, and asked me to write out a scenario as guide for the action and *mélodrame*.[1] The production was not to be hurried, however; it would do if ready in a few days.

The *mise en scène* of these things created no more difficulty than the distribution of the rôles. In addition to scenery and costumes for mounting excerpts from half-a-dozen operas, the stock of the new theatre included a large supply of fancy dresses of all sorts and sizes, together with a generous assortment of wigs sent down by Clarkson. On the Tuesday morning, in less than an hour, the entire cast was suitably furnished with effective costumes for a performance of "Bluebeard," to take place on the following evening. Then, after lunch, we held our first rehearsal. And very glad we were to have indoor occupation; for the weather, which had been fine and hot the week before, had gradually broken up, and it was now raining steadily every day. Fortunately, it improved again just in time for Prince Henry's visit.

I fear I cannot worthily describe that comic mime-play rehearsal or tell how cleverly Spalding tried to infuse into his mute company the spirit of Gaiety burlesque: how he taught us to enact the old story without uttering a word, and to extract real fun from the most absurd situations, making us do everything by means of action, gesture, and facial expression. A second Fred Leslie himself, the old amateur certainly found another Nelly Farren in Mme. Patti. She was the *Fatima* of the cast. Her quick sense of drollery,

[1] Puccini's opera was then barely known, and for her mime-play Mme. Patti wished me to follow the lines of Sardou's original plot.

the lightning rapidity with which she seized a comic point and elaborated it, added to her skill as a mime, her memory for detail, her agility and grace of movement, were all simply amazing. She was even willing to join in the rough-and-tumble business that Spalding invented. In a word, she entered with the vivacity of a girl into the spirit of the pantomime, and derived pure pleasure from every moment of it.

Much was impromptu fun, of course. Nor can it be said that the whole of the business adopted at the rehearsal was exactly repeated at the preliminary performance which we gave before a small audience of friends. The lively and appropriate music supplied by Mr. Hulley and one or two of his Swansea executants served as a suggestive reminder. But unquestionably the animation of the pantomime never flagged; while in two or three instances (notably one in which the writer sustained a rather grotesque fall that evoked shrieks of laughter from our friends in front) the proceedings had the additional charm of the unpremeditated.

On Saturday (August 23) the weather cleared as if by magic, and a hot midday sun was drying up the mists of the valley when Spalding and I drove to the little Penwyllt station to receive Prince Henry of Battenberg on behalf of Mme Patti-Nicolini. Our first duty, when he alighted from the train, was to explain to the Prince that, as they were going to sing for him in the afternoon, his host and hostess were compelled to deny themselves the pleasure of coming to meet him. He replied:

"I am very glad they did not take the trouble. Mme Patti honors me sufficiently as it is, and I should not have expected her to come to the station, even if our friend, Mr. Grahame Vivian, had not told me it was hardly possible in view of the performance." He was, I may add, accompanied

by his host at Clyne Castle, together with Miss Vivian, Count Gleichen, Lord Royston (afterward the Earl of Hardwicke), the Hon. Henry Bruce, Mr. T. Legh, M. P., and Mrs. Legh.

As we walked to the carriages the Prince asked me in what opera the diva intended to appear. When I told him the Garden Scene from "Faust," he was delighted.

"For me," he said " 'Faust' never loses its freshness, besides, I have never seen Mme. Patti as *Gretchen*. How wonderful that she should still be able to sing these youthful parts!"

Probably he wondered less when she came forward to greet him at the castle entrance, with Nicolini by her side. Dressed in her latest Paris gown,—an elegant creation in some soft silken material of bluish grey that showed off to perfection her *svelte* figure,—she looked extraordinarily juvenile as she made her graceful courtesy and, shaking hands with Prince Henry, bade him welcome to *"notre petit château de Craig-y-Nos."* Then, after presenting her husband, she led her royal guest to the little drawing-room in the old wing, and showed him her highly interesting collection of curios, bric-à-brac, and gifts of various kinds that had been offered to her in course of her long career.

A few minutes later we were all seated—a party of twenty-five or thirty—at a long luncheon table in the spacious conservatory, which was kept cool by artificial ventilation so as to avoid any risk of draughts. Mme. Patti sat at the centre of the table, with the Prince on her right and Mr. Graham Vivian on her left. She was in her most joyous mood. Indeed, she talked so constantly and laughed so heartily that Nicolini reminded her more than once to be careful not to fatigue her voice. *"Oui, mon ami,"* she would say with a demure look, and forthwith renewed her conversation. Both, however, excused themselves for not partaking

of the meal. They had lunched before midday, in order to be able to sing by half-past two. At two o'clock they retired to dress.

Seated as I was nearly opposite the Prince, I had ample opportunity for observing his engaging and affable manner. I noted it particularly when he leaned across the table and expressed to Nicolini his regret that the Princess (Beatrice) was not with him. He was "sure she would have been delighted to spend a few hours at Craig-y-Nos Castle and hear Mme. Patti once more." He obviously appreciated the absence of fuss, and would, I dare say, have been equally gratified had he been spared the "salute of twenty-one guns" that was fired both on his arrival and departure at Penwyllt.

Needless to add, Prince Henry admired the theatre and derived unqualified pleasure from the performance, which went with great smoothness under Arditi's sympathetic baton. Fewer than a hundred people were present, but the applause was, of course, rapturous; and at the end Mme. Patti sang two of the veteran conductor's waltzes. During tea the Prince listened to the orchestrion and paid his hostess some hearty compliments. Before leaving he said, loudly enough for us all to hear:

"I bid you *au revoir*, madame, not good-bye, and again I thank you a thousand times for your delightful entertainment. It has been a great privilege to hear you sing in your beautiful theatre. I shall never forget it."

He was to hear her only once again—not at Craig-y-Nos but at Covent Garden—before his death, which occurred about four years later. The recollection enhanced one's sense of loss and sorrow at the premature cutting off of an amiable personality. Mme. Patti referred to his visit several times. It was always "Poor Prince Henry! What a dear, sweet man! *Et comme il était beau, n'est-ce pas?*"

After the excitement had subsided the house-party ap-

preciably dwindled in numbers. But after a day or two it was renewed by the arrival of Sir Augustus and Lady Harris; also of some artists who had been invited to take part in the yearly charity concert at Swansea on August 28. The list for the latter affair comprised, in addition to Mme. Patti, Mme. Antoinette Sterling, the sisters Marianne and Clara Eissler, Durward Lely, Bonetti, Tito Mattei, and Wilhelm Ganz.

Sir Augustus was in great spirits. The industrious and versatile individual who that year filled the triple rôles of Sheriff of London, impresario of the Royal Opera at Covent Garden, and manager of Drury Lane Theatre, had just received his knighthood; and at the moment his labors appeared to sit as lightly on him as his honors. Adelina Patti had known him from his childhoood, when his father occasionally brought him, as a small boy, to stand in the wings and listen to an opera at Covent Garden. They were the best of friends. But this was the first time he had visited Craig-y-Nos, and, although he had now been the director of the Royal Opera (it had lately dropped the "Italian") for a period of four years, the idea of the famous singer's return to the scene of her former triumphs had not as yet been even mooted.

There were, of course, good reasons for this. Harris knew quite well that he could not afford to pay her a *cachet* approaching her ordinary terms. Again, she, for her part, was now under a contract with Mr. Percy Harrison that precluded her from singing in opera in Great Britain without his consent or managerial coöperation. Nicolini, aware of what her personal choice would be if she exercised it, did his best to keep her mind fixed upon a concert career, which (in England) was so much more lucrative and less burdensome than the labors inseparable from the opera house.

Sir Augustus stayed at the castle four or five days, but, so far as I am aware, he did not once put the question to his

hostess. They were "Adelina" and "Gus" to each other; never, at this stage, impresario and prima donna; and my friendly relations with both were such that, if the suggestion of Covent Garden had been broached on either side, I should certainly have heard of it. The point is only of importance, however, in view of what was to happen three years later, when, acting as intermediary between the two friends, I was fortunate enough to bring about the arrangement for Mme. Patti's final series of appearances in opera at Covent Garden.

It was during the worthy sheriff's visit that we rehearsed the new wordless play founded on "La Tosca." Mme. Patti asked him if he would stage-manage it. He declined the task, urging as an excellent excuse that he was "out for a holiday, and too glad to escape from the theatre as long as possible." Nevertheless, curiosity led him to peep in one afternoon while a rehearsal was going on. Becoming interested, he slipped into a dark corner of the auditorium and sat down without being noticed. We were going through the Supper Scene. I was enacting the part of *Scarpia,* and doing my best to portray in dumb-show the villainous proceedings of the unscrupulous Minister of Police.

Mme. Patti had mastered the business of this difficult scene and was acting it superbly. Every pose, every gesture, was a picturesque study that helped to express and carry along the story and give full effect to each dramatic episode. I had been stabbed. I had stretched myself full length in the middle of the stage. *La Tosca* was gazing in horror at my prostrate form, when she happened to raise her eyes and perceive Sir Augustus watching her intently from his seat at the back of the theatre. The horror-stricken look instantly melted into a smile. She called out:

"Gus, what are you doing there?"

"Enjoying myself."

"That 's all very well. If you come in at all, you ought to come on the stage and help us."

"My dear Adelina, I have already explained to you why I would rather not."

"Then you must n't stay!"

"Well, I am going," replied the impresario. "If this were an opera or a play I might have lent you a hand. But whatever it may be, my help is not needed so long as you are there. I am just beginning to realize that if you had not been the world's greatest singer, you could have been one of its best actresses." (Applause from the whole company, including the still prostrate *Scarpia.*)

Rather a long speech for Harris, but it came from his heart, and the compliment was sincere. Then he laughed his characteristic noisy laugh and strolled out of the theatre.[1]

An engagement in the North prevented him from staying for the performance, which could not take place prior to the concert at Swansea on the 28th. He managed, however, to attend the latter function, and, together with Lady Harris, witnessed the remarkable scenes of enthusiasm that took place in the crowded streets of Swansea and at the no less crowded concert-hall. I remember asking him whether, as Sheriff of London, he had ever beheld a more inspiring sight.

"No," answered Sir Augustus; "not even the Lord Mayor's Show, with me in it!"

He bade Mme. Patti a hurried farewell in the artists' room, thanked her for her hospitality, and rushed off to catch his train. Therewith ended his first and last visit to the Swansea Valley.

Next evening the performance of "Tosca" duly came off,

[1] This incident has already been related in my book, "Thirty Years of Musical Life in London," but it seems to me also to claim a place in the present volume.

but not exactly in the form and under the conditions that had been intended. We found at the penultimate rehearsal that the four acts occupied nearly two hours and a half, or about an hour more than the exigencies of an after-dinner entertainment to the friends in the valley would conveniently allow. It was consequently decided that the drama should be represented, not as a mime-play, but in a series of *tableaux vivants*—a much more ordinary and hackneyed method, the adoption of which caused every one keen disappointment. Instead of being given with continuous action, the story became a long-drawn series of pictorial illustrations, some forty-eight in number, and of course not nearly so interesting to the spectator.

Even so, however, it was a success. It should be mentioned that the part of *Paul Cavaradossi* was undertaken by Richard Nicolini (a son of the tenor by his earlier marriage), a youthful actor who had just started his career upon the French stage. This pleasant young fellow inherited some of his father's good loooks and dramatic talent, but none of his vocal powers. He assisted me with my make-up as *Scarpia,* and succeeded—chiefly by powdering my hair and coloring my moustache a jet-black—in imparting to me such a sinister Italian aspect that, when I entered Mme. Patti's dressing-room just before we began, she started back in surprise, stared at me a moment, then hissed out, "You *devil!*" It was enough. I knew I looked the character, and returned the compliment by expressing my admiration of the lovely picture presented by the new *Tosca.*

What a pity she never sang the opera! The only artist who would have rivalled her in it was the gifted Milka Ternina, who created it at Covent Garden in 1900—the same year that Puccini's opera was first produced at La Scala. In 1891 the constellation since known as the Young Italian school was

only just beginning to emerge from the horizon, for, curiously enough, when Arditi left Craig-y-Nos this same week, it was to conduct the first performances in England of Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana" at the Shaftesbury Theatre, London. The dawn of the new operatic era thus occurred only a decade too late—nay, hardly perhaps so much as that—for the genius of Adelina Patti to be associated with it. But none who remembered her superb *Aïda,* and now saw her depict the emotions of a *Tosca* upon the stage of her own little theatre, could entertain a doubt as to the brilliant things that would have resulted from that artistic union.

Early in September this enjoyable gathering at the castle came to an end. A few days of comparative rest—not more essential for our hostess than for some of her guests—followed upon the three weeks of incessant excitement and activity. Then the party broke up, and those who were laborers resumed their every-day duties in the musical field. Mme. Patti consented to indulge in a month of perfect tranquillity before singing at a few provincial concerts and undertaking yet another American tour, beginning in January, 1892. Nicolini, meanwhile, spent his autumn shooting and fishing, and listening with rapture to the orchestrion as it "unrolled" the celebrated "Ave Maria" from "Cavalleria Rusticana" for the first time.

On no subsequent occasion did I find the life at Craig-y-Nos Castle quite so crammed with strenuous occupation as during that initial experience. In consequence each visit grew more agreeable, and if in course of time the novelty wore off somewhat, the charm never did. It was a charm that emanated from the beauty of the place and the unique personality of its hostess, whose faculty for entertaining her friends and keeping them busy seemed never to desert her. Hence an attractiveness that was abiding and irresistible.

When I went down for the second time, it was winter—the Christmas-tide of 1892.[1] Mme. Patti was expecting to leave for the Riviera and Italy early in January, and a bare fortnight remained for the holiday and diversions of the festive season. The cold was rather severe; the hills were thickly clad with snow, and the contrast between this bleak December picture and the smiling landscape of August, as I had previously beheld it, was striking. Weather, however, made little difference to our hostess, save that she took her morning stroll in the winter garden. In the afternoon she drove out as usual, and more than once, when snow was plentiful, donned her heavy furs and enjoyed a sleigh-ride.

Among the guests this time was my old friend Enrico Bevignani, the sympathetic orchestra leader who had conducted most of the operas sung by the diva at Covent Garden, in Russia, and in Italy from 1871 till 1884. He had already been there a few days (for a purpose that was soon to be disclosed), and had brought with him the vocal score of the new opera "Pagliacci," which was not to be heard in London until the following May. One day after tea he played the music over to us. Mme. Patti liked it immensely. She quite fell in love with the *ballatella* sung by *Nedda* in the first act.

"What a bright, happy tune!" she exclaimed. "I am so glad to see that these young Italian composers are following in the footsteps of Rossini and Verdi, and keeping up the tradition of their country for giving us melody to sing."

Bevignani asked her if she would care to study the part of *Nedda*. He thought it would suit her.

[1] According to Arditi's "Reminiscences" (p. 299), Mme. Patti sailed for New York with the conductor and the other artists of the Abbey troupe on December 23, 1892. Obviously this was a mistake. It was in 1891 that she started from Liverpool, and in January, 1892, that the tour began. In December of the latter year Signor Arditi was in Brussels conducting a series of concerts, at the first of which (on the 21st) Mme. Melba appeared.

"No, I don't think I want to go in for these new operas. I answer you as I do when I am asked whether I would care to sing Wagner. There are plenty of sopranos who can do justice to heavy modern music, plenty who can manage the latest lyrical or dramatic rôles. For my work on the stage I had better keep now to the old répertoire. There are not so many capable of singing it; and, besides, the public always wants to hear me in the operas that it has heard me in from the first."

"You are quite right," said Bevignani. "But at least you will permit me to write and tell Leoncavallo what you say about his music?"

"By all means. Tell him also how pleased I am to find that some of the composers of to-day know still how to write for the voice, instead of the unvocal stuff, with horrid intervals, that wears out our throats and is as unpleasant to listen to as it is to sing. I don't allude to Wagner. You know that I love his music, and some of it is quite beautifully written for singers, even though his operas are too heavy for me. But there are others, *n'est-ce pas?*"

On Christmas Eve we had music in the theatre, followed by a Christmas tree and dance for the servants. Everybody received presents—some valuable, all useful and thoughtfully selected—from the hands of the Lady Bountiful of the castle. A few of the tenants on the estate were invited, and no one was allowed to depart empty-handed. Nicolini was positively beaming as he looked on. He could be generous too, when he liked.

The feature of the musical programme that evening was an old friend in a fresh guise—nothing less than "Una voce" with an entirely new set of "changes" or variations. This had been prepared with unerring skill by Maestro Bevignani, and it explained how he had been spending his time at the castle for best part of a fortnight. A model of clarity, neatness,

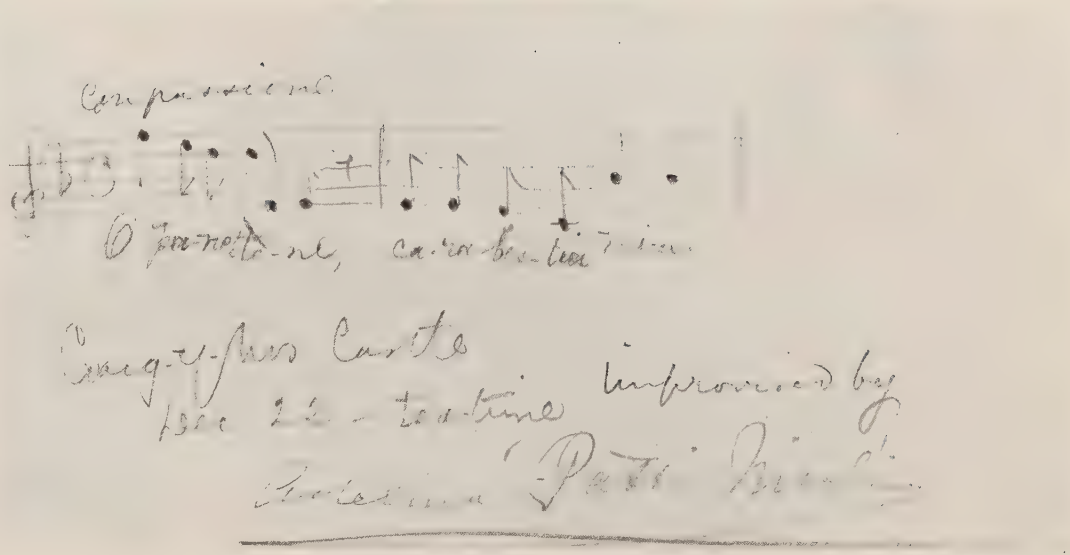
and simplicity, yet demanding faultless vocalization, the new arrangement did the Italian musician infinite credit; moreover, the variations suited Mme. Patti to perfection. I knew not what to admire most, the youthful eagerness with which she had set herself to master this novel version of a hackneyed theme, the rapidity with which she had memorized the unfamiliar *fioriture*, or the consummate ease and finish with which she executed the whole aria, cadenzas and all, as if utterly oblivious of the fact that she had been singing it in a totally different form for more than thirty years.

We congratulated her and thanked her for this flawless example of her art, which was yet to earn her many a triumph in public. She insisted on Bevignani sharing the applause. Afterwards she said to me:

"I think the 'changes' are simply lovely. Rossini would have been delighted with them, because they are in such perfect taste and not a bit awkward for the voice. That was what he always wanted. He never objected to 'changes' unless they distorted the character of his music."

I never knew her more lavish with her voice than during this merry period. Like a canary brimming over with song, she would always chime in with her golden notes the moment a familiar strain caught her ear. Sometimes it came from the orchestrion, sometimes from myself when strumming Wagnerian reminiscences upon the Steinway grand in the billiard-room; or, if there were no other provocation, she would herself extemporize a tune upon any subject that happened to seize her fancy, and give it out *con piena voce*.

One amusing instance of this occurred while we were at tea a day or two before Christmas. We had been informed that the Craig-y-Nos chef, an Italian, had undertaken to celebrate the festive season by making a huge specimen of the Milanese cake known as a *panettone*. It had, I think, been intended for Christmas Eve; but, learning that it was ready



A PAGE FROM MME. PATTI'S NOTE-BOOK

for consumption, Mme. Patti sent for it, fresh from the oven almost, to be cut up for tea. The butler carried it in on a tray with much ceremony, and as he entered the room the *panettone* was hailed with a burst of song from our hostess, given out to these absurdly incongruous words:

"O panettone, cara bestia mia!" [1]

This she repeated several times, amid laughter from all the company, to the same snatch of appropriate and characteristic *canto popolare*. It sounded so pretty and quaint that I wrote the trifle down in pencil on a page of my pocket-diary and asked the singer to autograph it.

Mention has already been made more than once of her talent for improvisation. Her innate faculty for expressing a thought musically was of the simple order that crystallizes itself in the efforts of the ballad-composer. Anyhow, she rhapsodized in melody; and, if the melody was not original or reminded one of something heard before, it could at least claim to be as good as many others that get written down and sung or played.

Hence the fact that more than once a musical thought uttered by Adelina Patti was caught and recorded (long before the era of the gramophone) by some industrious scribbler of crotchets and quavers, and so reached the ultimate glory of being engraved and published, with the name and perhaps the picture of the renowned vocalist, as its composer, adorning the front page.

[1] Roughly translated: "Hail, giant cake, dear beastie mine!"

CHAPTER XIX

American Tours (1892–93–94)—Pizzi's *Gabriella* given at Boston—With Verdi in Milan (1893)—False Economy at the Scala—Concerts in England—Patti Studies Wagner in German—Sings "Träume" at the Albert Hall—Elizabeth's "Prayer" and "Voi che sapete"—Appears before Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle—Suggestions for Her Return to Covent Garden—Talk with the Diva and Negotiations with Augustus Harris—An Intermediate Continental Tour—Début at the Philharmonic; Presented with the Society's Gold Medal—Triumphant Reappearance at Covent Garden (1895)—Six Farewell Performances in Opera—Complete List of Patti's Repertory

LET us resume our story in so far as it deals with the more public episodes in the reign of Patti. That reign was now hastening to its close; and its course, like the current of a broad but turbulent river when nearing the ocean, had become more tranquil and sedate. It had been contained in an artistic career of a length and character without precedent in musical annals. In the very nature of things, it was bound to present fewer features of absorbing interest as it approached its concluding phase.

Brief mention has already been made of an American tour, which occupied the winter and spring of 1891-92. There was little to distinguish it from those that immediately preceded it; nevertheless, it is worthy of remark because the last that gave New Yorkers an opportunity to see their old favorite in operatic representations. She was now under the management of Messrs. Abbey and Grau, who were at that time the joint directors of the Metropolitan Opera House. Her concert programmes everywhere included recitals from operas given in costume, with the support of a quartet of singers that comprised Guerrina Fabbri (contralto), Guille (tenor), Del

Puente (baritone), and Novara (bass), Arditi conducting.

The desire merely to see Patti in one of her operatic dresses, and occasionally to hear the sound of her voice, was such that in every town or city where she appeared every foot of standing room was occupied. From January until the middle of March she sang to packed houses; thus, the tour proved exceedingly profitable, the receipts (according to Arditi) being never under eight thousand dollars, and often very much more. Two concerts were given in New York at the Metropolitan; then, as a wind-up,—likewise, one might add, as an artistic corrective,—she appeared in complete performances of "Lucia" and "Il Barbiere." These terminated her actual stage work in the United States, after a lapse of rather more than thirty-two years since her operatic début at the New York Academy of Music.

Before sailing for England in May she signed a contract with Marcus Mayer for yet another "farewell" tour, to begin in October, 1893, and consisting of forty-five concerts, to be spread over five months. These were stipulated for at the rate of $4,500 each, or a slight advance upon the terms paid by Abbey and Grau. It was to have been a brilliant finale; but fortune decreed otherwise. The venture began badly, for Mme. Patti had a terribly rough crossing on the *Lucania* (then making its first voyage), and caught a cold so severe that she was unable to sing at the opening concert in New York. To make matters worse, a serious financial crisis was going on in the United States, the effect of which upon the receipts continued to be pronounced even after the prima donna had regained full control of her resources. Not until the 18th of November was she well enough to make her *rentrée* in New York.

At Boston she appeared in a new one-act opera entitled "Gabriella," written by Charles Byrne and composed expressly for her by Emilio Pizzi, a young Italian of consider-

able talent who had held an important musical post at Bergamo—Donizetti's native city—and subsequently settled down in England. The critics spoke very well of the work, the *Boston Herald* declaring that the music, like the story, was "strongly dramatic, and fitted Mme. Patti like a glove." A love duet, which she sang with Mr. Durward Lely, brought down the house and had to be repeated. A capital scene for the baritone and bass (Galassi and Novara) also made a highly favorable impression; while at the close, according to the same journal, the diva had to bring Signor Pizzi five times in front of the curtain.

The little opera was subsequently performed with tolerable success in Philadelphia, Washington, and other places. In the following year Mme. Patti gave it in concert form at the Royal Albert Hall, London; but its reception there was not sufficiently cordial to warrant further repetitions. Nevertheless, the music of "Gabriella" was clever and effective enough to have deserved a better fate.

The tour of 1893-94, owing to the prevailing financial troubles, resulted in very little profit, possibly some loss, for Marcus Mayer. As usual, he justified Mme. Patti's confidence by paying all the artists in full. His obligations to herself were also faithfully discharged until the company had returned to New York on its way home. Then, no doubt, there must have been a "screw loose," for, without warning to the public, Mme. Patti sailed for England on the day before the last concert, leaving the unlucky manager to wind up the tour without her. That she was not well advised in taking this step there can be no question. It left behind a very disagreeable impression.

Pleasanter recollections attended the visit to the Riviera and Italy in January, 1893, which had preceded the American tour last referred to. In this instance Mme. Patti fulfilled

a number of operatic engagements, and met everywhere with a reception that must have reminded her of old times. She appeared at Nice on January 9 in "Il Barbiere" before the first of a series of crowded houses, singing "Una voce" with the new ornamentations and introducing "Bel raggio" in the Lesson Scene. Her next opera was "Roméo et Juliette"; her third and last "La Traviata," in which she also made her *rentrée* at La Scala, Milan, on the 20th of the same month.

During the performances in Milan Verdi was superintending the rehearsals of his "Falstaff," which was to be produced at La Scala early in February. He seized the opportunity of being present when "La Traviata" was given, and Mme. Patti afterwards wrote me what a wonderful night it had been:

> The Scala was crowded—crammed from floor to ceiling; numbers of people were turned away, unable to obtain seats. My reception was simply grand, everybody standing up to greet me. The enthusiasm was so great throughout the performance that Verdi, who was in a box with Ricordi,[1] actually wept tears of joy and delight. It appears he said to Bevignani that my phrasing was too touching for words and that I sang divinely!

The only drawback was that the support was unworthy of the leading artist. The tenor made a fiasco at the outset, and was hissed; the baritone sang flat as the heavy father. The chorus was inferior. The orchestra, under Mascheroni, alone did well. (The Scala had had a bad season, and was economizing so as to make all it could out of Patti, while sparing nothing to launch "Falstaff" in brilliant fashion.) Yet the audience cheered her for minutes at a stretch, and accorded Verdi a rapturous ovation after the prelude to the fourth act. Indeed, it was by far the most emphatic triumph that Patti

[1] Giulio di Tito Ricordi, head of the famous Milanese publishing house, and now some years deceased.

ever achieved in this historic opera house. After two more appearances she went on to Florence and thence to Nice, where she remained until the middle of March.

On her return to England she entered upon an extended provincial tour under the management of Percy Harrison, and sang twice in London at the Albert Hall with her wonted success. The July concert was further rendered notable by the last appearance but one in public of the celebrated English contralto, Madame Patey, whose majestic delivery on that occasion of Handel's "Lascia ch'io pianga" will never be forgotten.

The first two or three weeks of Mme. Patti's holiday in Wales were marred by an attack of rheumatism in the knee, which caused her acute suffering. It had disappeared by the end of July, but she afterwards became rather subject to complaints of a rheumatic and neuralgic type.

It was at about this period (1893-94) that the idea of singing some not over-exacting composition by Richard Wagner first occurred to the greatest living exponent of the old Italian school. She listened with manifest enjoyment to the long-drawn *mélos* and complex harmonies of his later works. She was particularly fond of "Tristan" and "Die Meistersinger." What her orchestrion did not furnish at home in the way of selections she would often ask me, when at the piano, to provide. Not for a few years yet was she to yield to the allurements of Bayreuth and experience the unique delights of the *Bühnenfestspiel.* But she had heard most of the repertory well performed in London and elsewhere. She was longing to try over some "singable" Wagner, and, above all, to sing him to original text.

One day a musical friend—I believe it was one of the Eisslers—brought Mme. Patti a copy of the song "Träume," or "Studie zu Tristan und Isolde," which belongs to the set of

Fünf Gedichte composed by Wagner in 1862. It was just what she wanted; that is to say, not too long or trying for her voice, yet a characteristic bit of advanced Wagner. She began studying it in April, 1894, soon after her return from America, and was so pleased with the experiment that she decided to sing it in public at her next Albert Hall concert, which was fixed for May 21. She had been able since the early Vienna days to converse in German with tolerable fluency, and with the same musical accent that her quick ear enabled her to attain in every language she spoke. But, having never actually *sung* in German, she asked me to go over the song with her a few times before the concert.

However, there was little to do beyond making suggestions as to breathing-places in the longer passages, which are rather awkward to phrase. In the matter of pronunciation I found scarcely anything to criticize. Her interpretation was marked by thorough understanding, allied to her usual intensity of expression and musical feeling. It was a pleasure to hear the familiar harmonies played, so to speak, to a new obbligato supplied by the rich medium notes of the Patti *voix d'or*—pure, sustained, luscious, a veritable inspiration for "wondrous dreams." I remember her solitary complaint:

"It is a beautiful song, and I shall love to sing it; but there is not a single resting-place where I can stop *to swallow.* From first to last, the voice goes on without interruption. It is that which fatigues; and it is one of the things that make Wagner hard to sing. Still, I shall do my best."

Her "best" proved to be quite superlative. Accustomed as she was to the Albert Hall, its vast area made her task no harder in reality than, say, her *mezza voce* delivery of "Home, sweet home." Every note, every syllable, could be plainly heard by the remotest listener; each phrase in turn was admirably balanced; there was no sign of undue haste; the meaning of the song was perfectly caught and conveyed.

A more artistic rendering of "Träume" could hardly have been imagined. The new departure therefore proved an entire success. The critics were decidedly pleased, the *Daily Telegraph* remarking: "It seems a pity that the experiment should have been delayed so long, for the famous singer delighted her hearers to such an extent that not only did they demand a repetition of the piece, but subsequently exacted a further encore in the shape of Tosti's graceful 'Serenata.'"

After this it was only natural that she should decide to attempt something more—perhaps a selection from one of Wagner's earlier operas. We discussed the idea prior to her return to Wales, and it was settled that she should study Elizabeth's "Prayer," from "Tannhäuser," for the final Albert Hall concert of the season on July 7. I feared this might prove something of an ordeal, seeing how much longer and more sustained it is than "Träume." But Mme. Patti had no doubt about her ability to manage the "Prayer" with ease; and the event proved her judgment to be correct. In regard to this I will quote what appeared in the *Sunday Times* the day after the concert:

> The "Prayer" from "Tannhäuser" requires, as most people know, a steady, sustained tone, perfect management of the breath, and the purest *legato* singing. These qualities Mme. Patti brought to bear upon her task in fullest measure, as might, indeed, any other great Wagnerian artist. But in alliance with them there were beauty of tone, delicacy and intelligence of phrasing, accuracy of intonation, and clearness of enunciation such as one never hears in this touching prayer, either in or out of the opera. In a word, the rendering was incomparably fine. . . . Her triumph yesterday was extraordinary. A pin might have been heard to drop whilst she was singing, and at the close there was an outburst of enthusiasm from all parts of the hall. Mme. Patti returned to the platform, and with the utmost generosity sang the piece a second time, to the unmeasured delight of the vast audience.

IN THE LATE SIXTIES
From a painting by Winterhalter

So much for Patti's ambition to sing the music of Wagner —and in his own language. It was but a sample, of course, and the execution of a single piece is a vastly different thing from the arduous task of undertaking an entire rôle. But this born artist knew by instinct her own limitations ever better than some of her critics and most of her friends. Nothing, for instance, could have induced her, after an active span of thirty-five years upon the operatic stage, suddenly to attempt *Elizabeth* or *Elsa.* She had demonstrated what she was capable of doing if she cared to, and that embodied the sum total of her ambition in this direction. It is true that we made a study together of the "Lohengrin" excerpt known as "Elsa's Dream"; but, so far as I am aware, she never sang it in an English concert-room.

The summer of 1894 was spent very quietly at Craig-y-Nos Castle. The usual Welsh charity concert was again due at Swansea, and it was given there on July 12. It was the last of these functions in which Nicolini took an active part. He had not been announced to appear, for his health was not so reliable now as formerly. Various physical ailments made him anticipate with dread the exertion of singing before an audience. Nevertheless, he had his good days, and this was one of them; so, when it became known that Durward Lely had not returned from America in time for the concert, Nicolini readily consented to take his place. What is more, he sang "Salve dimora" as he had not sung it for many a year. Even his famous *ut de poitrine* (or high C) was willing to oblige on this occasion. Wilhelm Ganz was, of course, at the piano, and Marianne Eissler played the violin obbligato.

This was the summer when the gifted violin-player, August Wilhelmj, visited Craig-y-Nos for the only time. He was already there when I arrived for a short stay, and I found

Nicolini monopolizing nearly the whole of his time in tonal experiments with the wonderful examples of Stradivarius and Guarnerius which Ernest had "picked up" (for a few thousand dollars apiece) during his more recent peregrinations in the United States. The collection of these beautiful old instruments was rapidly becoming an expensive hobby of Nicolini's, and, though he could play a little, he was wholly incapable of doing them justice.

Wilhelmj, like his host, had also retired from public life, but he could still bring forth his old magnificent tone from a genuine Cremona, and it was a treat to hear him do so when in the right humor. I shall always remember how grandly he played his transcription of the "Preislied" one afternoon, with Clara Eissler at the harp as his accompanist. Surely no violin virtuoso ever lived who could extract a similar volume of noble tone from his instrument.

During his stay Mme. Patti prevailed upon Wilhelmj to play the obbligato for her in Gounod's "Meditation" upon the Bach prelude. He consented readily enough, albeit I gathered that his admiration for the French master's popular arrangement was less profound than that of the singer. The melody of the "Ave Maria," however, is not unworthy of the composer of "Faust," and assuredly no one else ever sang it as Patti did—that is, with her electrifying fervor, *élan*, and gorgeous beauty of voice. On the present occasion Clara Eissler executed the exquisite *arpeggi* of the prelude, and I had the privilege of playing the harmonium part. It may be added that full justice was done to the wonderful crescendo that forms the climax of the piece, where voice and violin united with extraordinary richness of effect.

In September Nicolini was much cast down by the news of the death of his cousin, the clever French composer Emmanuel Chabrier, to whom he bore a considerable resemblance. He was an immense admirer of Chabrier's talent and had sev-

eral of his compositions arranged for the orchestrion, among them the well-known rhapsody "España," and a selection from his opera "Gwendoline." The instant the former was started, Mme. Patti would seize her castanets and accompany the brilliant waltz air with tremendous vivacity and enjoyment. Poor Chabrier! His advanced ideas did not appeal to his own generation; yet, had he written "Gwendoline" a few years earlier, the title-rôle would undoubtedly have been presented to English audiences by the diva herself. He might not then have died of disappointment in a lunatic asylum.

The feature of the autumn concert tour of 1894 was the extraordinary furore aroused by Mme. Patti's delivery of her two Wagner "numbers," one or both of which had to be included in every programme. The newspapers in Scotland and the North were ecstatic on the subject. To understand this fully it must be remembered that Wagnerian music in the provinces, alike on the stage and in the concert-room, was just then attaining the apex of its pristine popularity; thus, the master's new British worshippers found an extra joy in listening to the veriest trifles from his vast store when rendered with the incomparable voice and art of their favorite singer.

She reserved, however, for her London concert (Albert Hall, November 28) yet another *bonne bouche,* in the shape of Mozart's "Voi che sapete," which, oddly enough, had never before found its way into her repertory. The reason was simply that until quite recently it had not been her habit to sing selected arias from operas other than those belonging to her own round of characters. For an ideal interpreter of "Batti, batti," and "Vedrai carino," her choice of Mozart pieces had long been absurdly restricted. Yet, because she had never played *Cherubino* or kept her (or Mr. Gye's) promise to attempt *Susanna,* she had refrained hitherto from sing-

ing their music. Hence the regrettable fact that no audience ever heard her in one of Mozart's most inspired airs—perhaps the gem of his immortal *Nozze*—to wit, "Deh vieni, non tardar!"[1]

But after a little hesitation she took up "Voi che sapete," happily in time to invest it with all her wonted loveliness of tone and a piquant charm that even Pauline Lucca—greatest of *Cherubinos*—had never surpassed. To these qualities she added a perfection of *bel canto* such as no contemporary singer, excepting perhaps Marcella Sembrich, could contrive to approach. The effect of the combination in the vast area of the Albert Hall was quite astonishing. Above everything else stood out the faultless purity and steadiness with which the melody was sustained; and when I spoke of this to Mme. Patti after the concert, she replied:

"I am glad it sounded well; for, to tell you the truth, I was so horribly nervous that I hardly knew what I was doing. I would have loved to stop and take a good deep breath somewhere, and—*swallow!*" Yet no one would have guessed it. Her resources had appeared to be under complete control—as no doubt they were, despite nerves, increasing years, and the rest of it. Such was the incalculable advantage to be derived from long experience and an impeccable method of "diaphragmatic breathing."

Early in December, 1894, Mme. Patti received her first "command" to sing privately before Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle. Her visit was replete with gratifying incident. To describe it in her own words:

"The Queen was gracious beyond measure. She paid me the unusual honor of directing that I should remain at the

[1] She made up for it, perhaps, by her delicious rendering of Lotti's "Pur dicesti," which she introduced at about the same time as "Voi che sapete."

castle for the night, so as to spare me the fatigue of the late journey back to town. Ganz went with me and of course played my accompaniments. Her Majesty received me with the utmost amiability, and expressed great pleasure at hearing me again after many years. She conversed with me in the sweetest manner between each of my pieces. Naturally, at the end I sang 'Home, sweet home,' and I could see that it brought tears to the dear Queen's eyes. She was really deeply moved. On my return to Wales the following day I found this telegram, signed by the Dowager Lady Southampton: 'Am desired by her Majesty to say the Queen hopes you had a good journey and were not fatigued.' Then came a signed picture and a beautiful brooch-pin with the royal crown and monogram, which I shall never cease to prize. Ganz, too, received a cigar-case mounted in gold."

It was at Craig-y-Nos during the Christmas recess that Mme. Patti told me this. I remember well that brief but lively fortnight. Into it we squeezed every imaginable gaiety for which the castle afforded facilities, including dances, dinners, a *matinée musicale,* a pantomime, and all the customary Christmas observances previously described in these pages. But it was also noteworthy for something else.

I had long cherished the idea of inducing the diva to appear once again, for a series of farewell performances, upon the historic stage that had witnessed her greatest triumphs from the time of her début in Great Britain. Many difficulties had stood in the way of this project, and some of them have already been incidentally touched upon. The most serious obstacle, perhaps, was her own disinclination to sing in opera again in London after a lapse of seven or eight years. Hardly less important were the conflicting interests presented by the Covent Garden conditions on one hand and the Harrison concert contract on the other.

However, I had ventured to sound both Sir Augustus

Harris and Mr. Percy Harrison, and had found, to my agreeable surprise, that those gentlemen were now willing to meet Mme. Patti's wishes—whatever they might be—in the matter. In other words, if she would consent to appear at Covent Garden for a limited number of nights at terms considered "possible" by Sir Augustus, Mr. Harrison was ready to relinquish for the nonce his claim upon her exclusive services in the United Kingdom.

Would she ever again sing anywhere in opera? That was the question. She had never definitely asserted as much. She had declared over and over again that her ambitions as a lyric artist were now wholly satisfied; or, at least, such of them as could attain realization in the pastime indulged in her own theatre. Nicolini's reply, when the query was put to him, had been an emphatic "No!" But the last word would not rest with him. Fortunately, as it happened, a decision on this particular point had already come about in a most unexpected way, and at what may justly be termed the psychological moment.

Down to September, 1894, no future arrangements had been completed, and, so far as any one knew, no negotiations were in progress. On the 15th of that month, however, Mme. Patti wrote me that she had had many tempting offers from the Continent for the following winter—so many, in fact, "that I have had great difficulty in deciding which to accept." But in reality she had decided; for she added, "I have at last signed contracts to sing several times *in opera* at Nice, soon after Christmas, and then at concerts in Germany and Austria."

In "opera"! That was the word that set me thinking. If she was willing to sing in opera at Nice, why should she not do so in London? Sometime in October I broached the subject to Sir Augustus Harris. He welcomed the idea gladly,

and named the highest fee he would be in a position to offer. It was to be £300 a night—the highest *cachet* ever paid to any artist at Covent Garden, yet less than half the sum that Mme. Patti received from Harrison each time she sang at the Albert Hall. He added:

"I have n't the least hope that you will succeed in persuading her to sing at Covent Garden at those terms; but you may try if you like, and you can also see whether Percy Harrison will give his consent."

"How long do you give me?"

"Until the end of the year."

"Good. She is now on tour, and I would rather not negotiate a delicate affair like this by correspondence. She has invited me to stay with her at Christmas, and then will be my opportunity."

It came one morning when I was accompanying my hostess in her exercise stroll round the winter garden. She spoke of the plans for her approaching Continental journey.

"You know, the arrangements have been slightly altered. I am not going to Nice until after the concert tour. I shall leave on January 10 for Berlin, and sing there on the 18th. Then we go direct to Vienna, where I appear on the 22d. Afterwards, on the way back, I have two more dates in Germany, at Leipzig and Dresden; and from there we go on to Nice, where I am to sing early in February."

"In what operas will you sing at Nice?"

"In 'Traviata,' 'Roméo et Juliette,' 'Barbiere,' and 'Lucia.'"

"Lucky Nice!"

She laughed. "Why do you say that?"

"Because the Riviera is so much more fortunate than London, where everybody is pining to hear you in opera just once again."

"Everybody! The old subscribers, the *vieille garde,* per-

haps. But there is a new generation at Covent Garden now; are they equally interested?''

''Can there be any doubt? They go to hear you at the Albert Hall, and go away wishing for more.''

''But Harris—''

''Say rather Harrison!'' And then I unfolded my mission with all the necessary diplomacy and care. She listened attentively and nodded her head very graciously.

''I will talk it over with Ernest and Percy, and to-morrow you shall know. I am not altogether sure whether I want to; but we will see.''

Next day it was settled that she would meet ''Gus'' on the evening of January 10 on her way through London, and, if practicable, arrange with him for six performances at Covent Garden, to be given late in the summer season.

The meeting between Mme. Patti and Sir Augustus Harris did not take place until January 12 (1895), the departure from Wales having been postponed for a couple of days. I went with the impresario to Paddington Station and kept him in good spirits while we waited for the train. As a rule he was the most sanguine of men, but in this instance he seemed to labor under an apprehension that something untoward would happen to prevent the fulfilment of his plan. I assured him that every obstacle had been removed; but he remained sceptical, I think, until he saw his old friend Adelina step vivaciously from her saloon carriage and, greetings over, take his arm to walk into the hotel. Then his doubts vanished.[1]

Both were looking very happy when I rejoined them after their brief conference, and even Nicolini's thin countenance was wreathed in smiles. The prima donna whispered that she was already looking forward to singing at Covent Garden

[1] "Thirty Years of Musical Life in London," p. 323.

again, though it would not be until the middle of June. She was evidently tired, so we wished her *bon voyage* and quickly withdrew. On the following day she left for Berlin, and twenty-four hours later the news was made public that Patti's reappearance at the Royal Opera would be one of the features of the coming season.

The first part of the tour abroad was marred by one slight *contretemps*. After triumphant successes at Berlin and Vienna, Mme. Patti caught cold and was unable to sing at Leipzig. She recovered, however, in time to keep her engagement at Dresden on January 29, and in due course began at Nice (on February 4) a series of operatic representations which, by reason of their extraordinary brilliancy, excited more than local attention and comment. The cosmopolitan audiences that frequent the capital of the Riviera were from first to last in a fever of unbounded enthusiasm, and the diva herself was fain to confess, in a letter to the present writer, that her appearances in the four operas had yielded "a continual succession of triumphs," whereof an "extra performance" of "Il Barbiere" was perhaps the most remarkable.

Additional appearances were asked for, but not conceded. Mme. Patti was always willing to combine business with pleasure when she paid a winter visit to the South of France, but in this instance she took care not to risk removing the bloom of freshness from her voice. Soon after her *rentrée* at Nice she celebrated her fifty-second birthday, and therewith completed her forty-fifth year of practically uninterrupted work as a public singer. Well might she write, "I am really beginning to believe what they all tell me—that I am a wonderful little woman!" The great point at this juncture was that she had shown the necessary strength and activity to resume occasional excursions into the region of opera. Her reappearance at Covent Garden could now, therefore, be anticipated with entire confidence.

She left Nice on March 24 for Paris and London, and, after four days' detention at Calais by a heavy gale, crossed the Channel on the 31st. She then remained in the metropolis for the Philharmonic Concert at Queen's Hall on April 3, to sing at which she had accepted the invitation of the directors, who in return were to bestow upon the illustrious singer their once coveted and still rarely bestowed gold medal.

It was her début with this society, and the promised distinction was well earned, for she drew an overflowing audience and proved to be in remarkably good voice. After she had sung "Una voce" and, for an encore, "Voi che sapete," Mme. Patti was led back to the platform by Dr. W. H. Cummings, the treasurer, and Mr. Francesco Berger, the secretary of the society. The former read a brief address, in which he referred to the pleasure she had given to all lovers of music in every great city in the Old and New Worlds, to her beautiful voice, and to her histrionic genius, which had received universal recognition. Then, wishing her "long life and every happiness," Dr. Cummings tied round her neck a ribbon to which was attached the gold medal, bearing on one side the head of Beethoven and on the other the inscription: "Presented by the Philharmonic Society of London; founded MDCCCXIII."

The brief ceremonial ended amid a hurricane of applause, which ceased only when the artist again came forward to sing "Home, sweet home." From any other lips the well-worn ballad would have sounded sadly out of place at a Philharmonic Concert; but not from hers. The renewed cheers, too, were spontaneous enough to indicate that the contribution was precisely what the Philharmonic audience had hoped for. Altogether the event passed off with a good deal of *éclat* and conferred obvious pleasure upon all who shared in it.

On Tuesday, June 11, 1895, Adelina Patti reappeared at

Covent Garden as *Violetta* in "La Traviata," after an absence of exactly ten years from the historic boards upon which she first sang in England.[1] For a whole month the season at the Royal Opera had been in full swing. The de Reszkes had not yet arrived; but Melba was there; Tamagno had been singing with Albani in "Otello" and with Giulia Ravogli in "Le Prophète"; Plançon had appeared in Boïto's "Mefistofele"; further, there had just occurred a notable revival of Verdi's "Falstaff" and the production of Frederic Cowen's new opera "Harold." Altogether the attractions of the general bill were quite up to the level associated with the palmy days of the Harris régime.

Nevertheless, it is no more than bare truth to state that the interest of these doings was cast into the shade by the excitement that Patti's promised return had by now aroused among London opera-goers. The rush for places at the libraries was a vivid reminder of old times; the prices paid for them recalled the extravagant figures recorded in connection with the famous bygone Patti nights. Society was fairly agog in anticipation of an experience now regarded almost as a tradition—an experience whereof the most brilliant Melba and de Reszke nights never furnished more than a faint replica. While, therefore, every seat was sold days beforehand, the "old guard" began forming its queue at the gallery entrance before midday on the morning of the performance. At night the house was packed to repletion in every part, and the Prince and Princess of Wales, with their three daughters and the Duke and Duchess of York (the present King and Queen), occupied the royal box.

To the artist herself this return signified quite as much as it did to the public, who now welcomed her with rapturous

[1] She had been heard in opera in London once during the season of 1887, but that, it will be remembered, was on the occasion of her first (and last) appearance at Her Majesty's Theatre.

enthusiasm to a scene that she was generally supposed—not without good reason—to have quitted for ever.[1] She had been exceedingly nervous for hours, nay, for days before. Chatting about it subsequently, she said to me:

"When I made my entry, when I looked across the footlights at the familiar picture, as I went on bowing again and again, while the storm of applause seemed as if it would never cease, I felt more like breaking down and crying than singing. But after we had sat down to the supper-table and De Lucia [the *Alfredo*] had begun the 'Libiamo,' I suddenly regained my confidence and courage. I never lost them again. I think I never sang my 'Libiamo' better!"

In many respects she had never sung the whole opera better. In a dramatic sense, she had never been such an ideal *Violetta*. The effortless carrying power of her tone, its undiminished purity and freshness, astounded listeners whose memories of her went back a quarter of a century and more. To complete the miracle, she was still the graceful, elegant, youthful-looking Patti of yore, defiant as ever of the lapse of time. In the Ball Scene of the third act, above all, she was now a radiant, dazzling figure, the counterpart of whom had never been seen on this stage.

For this scene Mme. Patti had conceived the idea of wearing a magnificent white dress, the corsage of which was studded with hundreds of large diamonds, dismounted for the occasion from their settings in some of her finest jewels. This mass of coruscating brilliants gave the effect of a veritable blaze of light; and its extraordinary beauty was on a par with the value of the collection, which, according to M. Nicolini, amounted to fully £200,000. It contained in all thirty-seven hundred stones, and these had been mounted by one of the leading Paris jewellers upon a kind of cuirass extending over the back as well as the front of the corsage. At

[1] See Appendix AA.

the end of the season the diamonds were restored to the various objects from which they had been temporarily removed.

The *Daily News* had the following paragraph on the subject:

To-morrow night another opportunity will be afforded at the opera of seeing the Patti costumes and the Patti diamonds, which in "La Traviata" last Tuesday shared the honours even with Mme. Patti's singing. The value of these gems, said to be upwards of £70,000, has rendered necessary certain precautions at the opera house; where a couple of individuals not wholly unknown at the Bow Street establishment opposite, silently figure among *Violetta's* guests. In the Banquet Scene Mme. Patti wears some wonderful sapphires; but in the Ball Scene, altogether apart from coronet, necklace, and bracelets, the front of her dress is a perfect blaze of gems. At night—although perhaps the precautions adopted are not quite so simple as those of the first Mr. Sanger, who locked up his cash-box in an iron safe which was fixed in the lion's den—the Patti diamonds are in perfectly secure custody.

Sir Augustus Harris was a proud man that evening. Outwardly calm and self-possessed, wearing his most genial smile, he strolled from the stage to the auditorium and from the auditorium to the stage in a veritable seventh heaven of delight. Scarcely less happy was his talented and faithful conductor, Luigi Mancinelli, who secured a performance worthy of the event. De Lucia's suitability for the part of *Alfredo* lay in the possession of passion rather than vocal charm; but Ancona, then at his best, sang quite superbly as the elder *Germont*. Altogether the ensemble was satisfying, and for Mme. Patti the night was a triumph without flaw.

Three days later she sang at a State Concert at Buckingham Palace, and by request of the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII) joined the royal circle before supper to receive their compliments and congratulations. On the fol-

lowing (Saturday) night she again appeared at Covent Garden in the "Traviata" before a no less brilliant and demonstrative audience. The unequivocal success of the Patti revival had by this time made an irresistible appeal to operagoers of every age and class, and the demand for seats at the remaining representations of the series greatly exceeded the capacity of the house.

Her next appearance was made in "Il Barbiere," the opera most closely identified with her name and fame; and her *Rosina* stood forth once more, alone and unapproachable, as the ideal embodiment of Rossini's heroine. It retained in fullest measure the qualities of vivacity, piquancy, grace, and charm that had so long rendered it an inexhaustible source of delight; and while freshness and juvenility now constituted its most striking feature, this was of less importance, in reality than its value as a consummate example of the art of the *bel canto* at a time when that art was slowly but surely entering upon its ultimate period of decline. Mme. Patti sang the whole of the well-known *bravura* music with extraordinary ease and finish, and in the Lesson Scene introduced the air from "Semiramide," "Bel raggio," with some new ornaments and a thrilling final cadenza that brought down the house. Bevignani conducted, and the cast included a French tenor named Bonnard (*Almaviva*), Ancona (*Figaro*), Pini-Corsi (*Bartolo*), Arimondi (*Basilio*), and the evergreen Mlle. Bauermeister (*Marcellina*).

During the third week of her engagement Mme. Patti sang twice in "Don Giovanni," and in the fourth wound up with a repetition of "Il Barbiere," making it harder than ever to decide in which of these two operas her genius manifested the greater degree of fascination. Had a verdict been challenged, the jury would probably have been found evenly divided. Her *Rosina* had shown her execution of *coloratur* passages

to be still unsurpassed, and indeed unsurpassable. Her *Zerlina,* if finer now than ever, was so only because Mozart's music fell easily within the compass of her medium and lower head tones, the timbre of which had grown more round and beautiful with the gradual elimination of the acuter notes in the head register. Such a delineation, such singing, in this particular masterpiece afforded a new experience for the younger generation of opera-lovers—just beginning, as it then was, to temper Wagner with Mozart in accordance with the Munich and Dresden custom. To her audience, therefore, the *Zerlina* of Adelina Patti was alike a revelation and a joy.

The supporting company was by no means of remarkable merit, though on the whole competent. It included one famous artist in M. Victor Maurel, whose *Don Giovanni* was still an elegant and distinguished cavalier, if fading somewhat. Of the "ladies in black" Miss Margaret Macintyre's *Donna Elvira* was the more successful. Mr. Philip Brozel as *Don Ottavio,* M. Castelmary as *Leporello,* Signor Pini-Corsi as *Masetto,* and Mr. Charles Manners as the *Commendatore* completed the cast, while Signor Bevignani again conducted.

A final performance of "Il Barbiere" took place on July 4, when the audience comprised, in addition to many royalties, a large sprinkling of well-known Americans, who led the cordial parting demonstration proffered to the diva on the conclusion of her memorable task. For memorable in every imaginable way had been Mme. Patti's return to the London operatic boards. Both as an artistic and a physical achievement, it stands without parallel. From the impresario's point of view, it was so successful that Mme. Patti promised him to repeat her visit to Covent Garden in the following season. But, alas, in June, 1896, Augustus Harris lay prematurely dead of over-work and self-neglect! The experiment was not destined to be tried again.

Here it will be convenient to give a complete list of the forty-two operas in which Mme. Patti appeared during her stage career. It included several that she never sang at Covent Garden; and as a monument of versatility, of comprehensiveness and catholicity of styles, it remains unrivalled:

Mozart—"Don Giovanni"
Rossini—"Il Barbiere di Siviglia," "Mosè in Égitto," "La Gazza Ladra," "Otello," "Semiramide"
Bellini—"La Sonnambula," "I Puritani"
Donizetti—"Lucia di Lammermoor," "Linda di Chamouni," "Don Pasquale," "L'Elisir d'Amore," "La Figlia del Reggimento"
Verdi—"Il Trovatore," "Giovanna d'Arco," "La Traviata," "Luisa Miller," "Ernani," "Rigoletto," "Aïda"
Meyerbeer—"Dinorah," "Les Huguenots," "L'Etoile du Nord," "L'Africaine"
Flotow—"Martha"
Gounod—"Faust," "Mireille," "Roméo et Juliette"
Auber—"Les Diamants de la Couronne," "Fra Diavolo"
Thomas—"Hamlet"
Bizet—"Carmen"
Delibes—"Lakmé"
Gomez—"Il Guarany"
D'Ivry—"Les Amants de Vérone"
Campana—"Esmeralda"
Lenepveu—"Velleda"
Ricci—"Crispino e la Comare"
Poniatowski—"Gelmina"
Cohen—"Estella" ("Les Bluëts")
Pizzi—"Gabriella"
Pollonnais—"Dolores"

CHAPTER XX

Patti and the Wordless or Mime Play—Tours Abroad and at Home (1896)—The Welsh Charity Concert at Cardiff—Swansea's Record Surpassed—"Land of my Fathers" in Welsh—Another Visit to the Riviera—French Poets and the Diva—Sings in the Opera "Dolores" at Nice—Nicolini's Declining Health—His Death at Pau—His Influence on Patti—Her Reappearances at the Albert Hall and Crystal Palace—She Introduces Baron Rolf Cederström—A Third Matrimonial Venture—The Wedding at Brecon—A Final Appearance at Covent Garden

THE extraordinary success that attended Mme. Patti's brief return to the Covent Garden boards in 1895 gave rise to quite a numerous batch of ingenious rumors regarding her future activities in the operatic field. Most of these unfounded reports were allowed to pass without contradiction. But one in particular was circulated with so much persistence that it was thought advisable to meet it with a positive denial. The statement in question was to the effect that Mme. Patti had definitely promised to study the part of *Elsa* in German, and that she would sing it in London under Hans Richter during the spring of 1896. In authorizing the contradiction of this statement she requested me to say that "Much as she loved the music and the part of *Elsa*, she feared she would not now be equal to the task of undertaking so fatiguing a rôle."[1]

Truth to tell, opera was now less in her thoughts than the mime-play. Directly she arrived at Craig-y-Nos after her exciting experiences in town, she began rehearsing a new "drama without words" entitled "Mirka l'Enchanteresse,"

[1] The *Sunday Times*, September 15, 1895.

invented for her by M. Georges Boyer (then Secretary of the Paris Opéra and a writer on *Le Figaro*), and furnished with illustrative music by M. André Pollonnais. The story embodied a Bohemian love romance wherein Mme. Patti had to subjugate some savage Croats by the fascination of her singing and posturing, somewhat after the fashion of *Caterina* in her famous scene with the Kalmucks in "L'Etoile du Nord." Thanks to her skill and the added charm of some graceful music and pretty costumes and scenery, the picturesque piece made a notable impression in the castle theatre upon a couple of crowded audiences (July 22 and August 3, 1895), who vastly applauded the energetic heroine and her co-workers.

Nor did the career of "Mirka" terminate here. In the following January (1896) it was performed at the Gaieté, Paris, at a charity representation that realized 30,000 francs. This was Mme. Patti's first appearance before the Parisians as a "mime." But, while admiring her new talent, they found chief delight, of course, in her vocal efforts, which roused all the old enthusiasm—particularly when she supplemented *Mirka's* music with the Baronne de Rothschild's familiar ditty, "Si vous n'avez rien à me dire." (She had warbled it to their parents thirty years before.) During this visit the popular *cantatrice* also sang twice at the Opéra, and later on gave another performance of "Mirka" at Nice. At Monte Carlo she had the usual successes in "Il Barbiere" and "La Traviata." What gave her most pleasure there, however, was her hit in the new "wordless play."

These things she readily did in public abroad; but somehow it seems never to have occurred to her to perform a mime-play in England, except in her own little theatre. Probably nothing would have induced her to enact one in London. Yet at home she never tired of inventing, rehearsing, and acting them. The day after "Mirka" was staged she wanted something else. At my suggestion, a version of "East Lynne"

was prepared, in which she portrayed with astonishing realism of gesture and facial expressions the sufferings of the unhappy heroine. Her make-up as the supposed widow in this piece roused the ire of Nicolini. He considered it "very bad luck" for her to wear crape, even on the stage, during his lifetime, and vainly endeavored to dissuade her from doing so. Perhaps he felt a presentiment. At any rate, not long afterwards she was actually wearing "widow's weeds" on his account.[1]

By October Mme. Patti was once more on her autumn concert tour, under the guidance of Percy Harrison. She caught a cold at Wolverhampton, made it worse by singing at Sheffield, and was unable to appear at Birmingham, though she subsequently made up for the disappointment there. But, with this exception, the tour went smoothly enough, and at most of the concerts hundreds of applicants for admission were turned away. She also crossed to Ireland and won triumphant successes at the hands of her cordial admirers in Dublin and Belfast. On November 26, supported by Edward Lloyd, Santley, Mme. Belle Cole, David Popper, and other artists, she sang in London again at the Albert Hall before an enormous crowd; her voice fresh, clear, and very nearly as strong as ever.

After her return from the Riviera in the spring of 1896 a similar round of engagements was fulfilled, a short provincial tour winding up with more pretentious concerts in the metropolis in May and June. Such, indeed, was now the order of events into which, year after year, the life of the illustrious singer was gradually shaping itself. What she

[1] In describing this "East Lynne" production in "Thirty Years of Musical Life in London," I stated that it was given before instead of after "Mirka." The error was a trifling one, but as both pieces were mounted at Craig-y-Nos Castle during the same summer (1895) it is as well that they should be mentioned here in their proper order.

sang at her concerts mattered little, in one sense. The public cared not, so long as she continued to give them the old arias with most of the old *bravura,* or exhibited the still matchless *legato* in "Pur dicesti," "Voi che sapete," and "Home, sweet home." It must be conceded, however, that she rarely lost a chance in these days of enriching her programme with some untried item. Her new contribution at the Albert Hall summer concert in 1896 was Schubert's "Ave Maria"; and its long-drawn *cantilena* was poured forth, as one writer said, "with a tenderness, a fervor, a beauty of phrasing, the secret of which is hers alone."

One Patti "function" having now become so much like another, further detailed description of them in these pages would involve a wearisome repetition of things already said. Nor would any useful purpose be served by the mere enumeration of the more or less regular annual events that marked the closing years of the artist's public career. It is certain that the interest of her audiences never waned. Had it done so, there might have been something fresh for her critics to say. As it was, their sole ground for complaint was the difficulty of turning new sentences in order to impart variety to their notices.

Conspicuous among her prescribed round of engagements was the one in which she took most pride and which brought not a penny to her exchequer, but, on the contrary, cost her a good deal of money and trouble. This was the concert that she gave every autumn in aid of the local Welsh charities. I refer to the subject again in connection with the concert of September, 1896, to which Mme. Patti attached special importance, because she gave it, not as usual at Swansea, Neath, or Brecon, but at the more distant town of Cardiff, where it now took place for the first time. The reason for the change was somewhat peculiar.

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It should have been Swansea's turn. In an unlucky moment, however, it occurred to the Hospital Committee to issue a schedule of prices lower than that of previous years. The fact came to Mme. Patti's knowledge, and, her consent not having been previously obtained, she took it as a personal slight, and declined to give the concert there at all. The committee begged for forgiveness, but in vain. Cardiff had been communicated with in the meantime, and was only too willing to accept the risk of charging the customary high prices for an afternoon concert, provided the diva herself was coming to sing. So, exit (temporarily) Swansea, enter Cardiff!

Much to her satisfaction (and, let me add, Nicolini's, for he was chiefly responsible), the change of venue proved successful beyond expectation. I can speak of it from personal knowledge, for Mme. Patti made a special point of my going with her to Cardiff. She explained:

"I want you to be my spokesman. Some one has to make a speech in reply to the vote of thanks, and you must do it."

"But where is Spalding?"

"He is not staying with us this year."

"Then why not M. Nicolini?"

"You are joking. You know what his English is like, and he cannot make a speech, even in French. Besides, his health is not good enough for him to make the effort. No; I shall depend upon you."

There was no more to be said. I arrived at the castle a day or two before the concert, which was fixed for September 16, and quickly discovered that unusual pains had been taken to render it attractive. Besides the "Queen of Song"—that honored title which the Welsh, of all people, were most careful never to omit—the list of artists included Marianne and Clara Eissler, Ffrangcon Davies, Hirwen Jones, Franklin Clive, Bonetti, and Tito Mattei, with, of course, Wilhelm

Ganz as accompanist. No need to particularize. It was a good combination and resulted in a capital concert.

On the 15th a matinée took place in the Patti Theatre, to which a large party of friends were invited. They were treated to a surprise; for, besides displaying her genius in a new wordless play called "Le Malheur d'un Peintre" and singing Gounod's "Ave Maria," the indefatigable hostess prevailed upon "Ernesto" to appear with her in the Chamber Scene from Act IV of "Roméo et Juliette." Her singing that day was exceptionally magnificent; but her husband betrayed his growing physical weakness and barely managed to pull through the long duet. It was the last time I ever heard him upon the stage. He had been my first *Faust,* my first *Roméo,* my first *Radamès,* my first *Lohengrin;* and this was the end!

The receipts at the Cardiff concert amounted to £800, which was a record for these Welsh charity undertakings. It also furnished some new experiences. Mme. Patti told me she had never had such a "right down royal" reception. Tears stood in her eyes as she waved her hand and bowed right and left in response to the uproarious greetings of the Cardiff folk. This was even more remarkable than the scene in the Park Hall at the close of the concert, though that was unforgettable enough.

Proposing the vote of thanks, the chairman of the committee, Dr. Edwards, expressed a hope that "when the great prima donna came among them again she would be prepared to sing them a song in their native language. She had sung in every clime, and had stirred the hearts of all grades of people throughout the civilized world, but they could assure her that there were no warmer breasts to express gratitude than the Welsh. When she came to sing her Welsh song, they would all be there!" This utterance was, of course, cheered by the audience with might and main.

While the worthy doctor was speaking, Mme. Patti had

been seated upon a music-stool at the grand piano. When he had finished, she bowed to every one with her winning smile, then motioned to me to go to the front of the platform. As it happened, she had—by a pure coincidence—supplied me beforehand with the material for an affirmative reply to the wish that Dr. Edwards had expressed.[1] I was able to announce, as a wind-up to my speech, that she had long made up her mind to learn a song in Welsh, and that, "with the aid of the two Welsh singers they had heard that day [Messrs. Hirwin Jones and Ffrangcon Davies], she would endeavor to accomplish an authentic rendering of 'Land of my Fathers' in their native tongue."

The statement naturally created a furore; and, when Mme. Patti rose to leave, the big assemblage rose also, amid a tempest of applause that was taken up by the crowd outside and practically never ceased until her train steamed out of the Cardiff station. Nor did she forget her promise; for she subsequently paid the town a second visit and contrived to sing "Land of My Fathers" in Welsh with a highly creditable accent.

In February, 1897, Mme. Patti was once more singing in opera in the Riviera. Her *rentrée* at Monte Carlo was noteworthy for the unique compliment paid her by four of the most distinguished French *littérateurs* then living, who between them wrote in her honor the following sonnet:

Es-tu le rossignol, la rose, l'harmonie,
Jeune divinité du ciel italien?

[1] Among other things, I mentioned that this was the eleventh concert in aid of Welsh charities that Mme. Patti had given since she came to live at Craig-y-Nos Castle in 1879; that Swansea had had the largest share, namely five, Neath two, Brecon two, and Brecon also another on behalf of the local Eisteddfod; and that Cardiff, having responded to the call so bravely, would assuredly enjoy its turn again.

Es-tu l'amour, l'esprit, le charme, le génie,
Etoile aux éclairs d'or de l'art cécilien?
(Théophile Gautier)

O Diva radieuse! Ô musique infinie!
Tu nous suspens à toi d'un céleste lien,
Tu portes dans ton œil le pleur d'Iphigénie,
La gaieté de Ninon et l'éclat de Tallien.
(Arsène Houssaye)

Chante, Ô ma Lucia, chante, Ô mon Adeline,
Tressaille sous ton lys et sous ta mandoline,
Respire dans ta pourpre et dans ta floraison.
(Théodore de Banville)

O brune Adelina, comme Vénus la blonde
De la pointe du pied boît l'écume de l'onde,
Tu sembles une fleur qui boît une chanson.
(Charles Coligny)

On the 22d of the same month, at Nice, the object of this graceful tribute created a new operatic rôle for the last time. Unfortunately, it was not worthy of her still radiant gifts. The opera was called "Dolores," and the character of a Spanish heroine no doubt attracted her, despite the clumsy handling of the story, which was quite devoid of dramatic fibre. Her chief reason for appearing in it, however, was that it was composed by her friend André Pollonnais, who, as already mentioned, wrote the music for the pantomime play "Mirka." But he, too, was handicapped by the feeble libretto, and his score extracted little praise from the French critics. Truth to tell, Mme. Patti should never have accepted the work. In these matters, however, her loyalty to her friends was sometimes stronger than her sense of what was due to her own artistic dignity. Still, it may be noted that she never produced "Dolores" at Craig-y-Nos.

Meantime, the state of Nicolini's health had begun to give rise to serious concern. It had grown worse instead of better during the sojourn in the South of France, and on the way home to Wales a London specialist was consulted. In the middle of March Mme. Patti wrote me (from the Hotel Cecil) that "Ernest was far from well"; that they would have to make a brief stay in town before proceeding to "beloved Craig-y-Nos," but that she would be unable to leave the hotel to visit her friends. In reality her husband was suffering from such a complication of kidney, liver, and other disorders that there was little hope of his recovery.

He was unable to accompany her to Brecon on May 24, when, with much quaint ceremony, she was made an honorary burgess of the ancient Welsh borough.[1] The scroll of freedom was handed to her in a casket carved from a piece of oak taken from the roof of the Brecon Priory Church, a building reported to be a thousand years old. Upon the cover of the casket was the following inscription:

> Presented to Mme. Adelina Juana Maria Patti-Nicolini by the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses of the Borough of Brecon, with the honorary freedom of the borough, in recognition and acknowledgment of her eminent and her munificent services to the poor of Brecon. May 24, 1897.

A similar honor was conferred upon her in later years by the town of Swansea, and she was doubly proud to receive this because it made her the only lady in the United Kingdom whose name stood upon the burgess-roll of more than one borough.

Domestic anxiety did not interfere with the popular singer's public engagements, though it is true that in this same month she disappointed an Albert Hall audience on account of an inflamed eye, caused by a piece of grit lodging in it on

[1] See Appendix BB.

the railway journey from South Wales to London. The concert duly took place, with Mme. Albani as *remplaçante;* but three weeks later (June 3) Mme. Patti made amends by appearing before another huge gathering. Yet again she sang a month after that, when it may be mentioned that, in honor of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, she opened the concert with a "new version" (*sic*) of the national anthem, supported by a group of eight vocal students from the Royal College of Music.[1]

There was some talk of abandoning the customary autumn concert tour; but after a visit to Brighton Nicolini's health slightly improved, and it was decided that the tour should be carried out. In September the invalid went to Paris in the care of his son Richard, and on the 9th Mme. Patti mentions in a letter from the Great Western Hotel that she had gone to see him off at Newhaven and what a splendid crossing he had. After the tour had concluded, she rejoined him for a brief space in the South of France, where he was spending his time alternately at Grasse and Cannes; then she returned and sang at the Albert Hall on December 4.[2] She remained at Craig-y-Nos Castle until the New Year. Her husband's condition, however, grew steadily worse, and, as a last resource, he went to Pau to take the waters. She arrived there just in time to be at his bedside when the end came.

[1] The object of the altered version was not quite clear. That it was not a vast improvement upon the original will be gathered from the following sample:

"From every hurt or harm,
Dread famine, war's alarm,
God save our Queen.
May she uphold our laws,
And ever give us cause
To sing with glad applause,
'God bless our Queen!'"

[2] Her rendering, with Edward Lloyd, of the duet from "Don Pasquale" was the gem of this concert. It was one of those perfect things that dwell in the memory.

Ernest Nicolini died at Pau on January 18, 1898,[1] and was buried two days later, Mme. Patti herself superintending the funeral arrangements. She afterwards spent a few weeks quietly at San Remo, and did not return to her Welsh home till the middle of April.

When her second husband died Mme. Patti was within a few days of attaining her fifty-fifth birthday. She looked marvellously young for her years, and the world was still fain to declare her the best-preserved woman as well as the greatest singer of her epoch. Her life with Nicolini had, on the whole, been extremely happy. Whatever his faults (and they were neither few nor negligible), he knew how to take care of her, to shield her from annoyance, to look after her health, to prevent her from over-taxing her strength, above all, to ward off monotony or *ennui*. They were genuinely devoted to each other, these two aristocrats of the operatic universe; and, despite certain selfish idiosyncrasies, Nicolini always knew better than to oppose his wife's will in matters that touched her deeply.

That he in some measure remoulded her character has already been said. To what extent his influence was absolutely

[1] "He had practically retired from the stage about twelve years before, though he afterwards sang in public for a time at Mme. Patti's concerts, both in England and America. The obituary notices omit to mention the fact that he first came to London in 1848, when a boy of fourteen, and resided some time with his mother in Queen Street, Golden Square. His chief companion then was Wilhelm Ganz, who, by the way, nearly forty years later acted as best man at his wedding with the 'Queen of Song.' He made his début at Covent Garden as *Edgardo* in "Lucia" in 1866. . . . By dint of what was really a *tour de force*, he used to sing the florid music of *Almavira* in "Il Barbiere"; but he always shone to best advantage in robust parts, and of these his two finest were, probably, *Raoul* and *Radamès*. He was a capital actor and an admirable musician."—The *Sunday Times*, January 23, 1898. Nicolini was born at St. Malo, February 23, 1834, and was therefore very nearly sixty-four when he died.

for the best can hardly be stated with accuracy. In one or two respects it might assuredly have been more beneficial, but these may be allowed to pass. He was inclined to be stingy over trifles, albeit as a rule he was neither ungrateful nor lacking in generosity. He liked nothing better than to be surrounded by his own and his wife's friends; he even shared occasionally her spirit of Bohemianism. He did not mind so long as his pleasures were not interfered with and the unwritten laws of the castle remained unbroken.

During the period of mourning, which extended over a few months, Mme. Patti entertained no guests, save, perhaps, an intimate friend or two. When she made her reappearance in public at the Albert Hall on May 26 (1898) she wore the "widow's weeds" to which Nicolini had objected so strongly on the occasion of the "East Lynne" performance; and a very charming, sympathetic figure she made in them. At a second concert in the same building in July she was no longer in mourning. But the quiet, not to say "simple life" inaugurated at Craig-y-Nos that summer was destined to endure for many years.

Between the two concerts just recorded, Mme. Patti gave elsewhere another notable exhibition of sustained physical vigor and comparative freshness of vocal power. She had not stood upon the Handel Orchestra at the Crystal Palace for eighteen years, when she appeared there, on June 26, at one of the grand choral concerts that used to fill in the musical gap at Sydenham when the Handel Festival did not occur. Her tone still rang wonderfully clear and true through the vast centre Transept. It was observed that she made less effect in Handel's declamatory air, "From mighty kings," than in lighter pieces such as "Voi che sapete" and "Pur dicesti," not to mention the inevitable "Home, sweet home." But the real cause for wonder lay in the fact that the contrast in this huge place was not more marked. She was enthusiasti-

cally applauded by an audience that numbered nearly twenty-three thousand persons.[1]

The autumn provincial tour of 1898 extended over many populous towns and reaped the usual plentiful harvest. After its conclusion at Nottingham, toward the end of October, Mme. Patti went back to Craig-y-Nos Castle, and thence emerged from her peaceful retirement only to take part in an Albert Hall concert on Monday, November 14. That night, however, will not be readily forgotten by those of her friends who happened to be present.

The writer, for one, remembers it well—a raw, foggy November evening, with atmosphere so thick and yellow that one could barely see across the broad oval expanse of the hall. Not that such familiarly unfavorable conditions ever affected the crowd at a Patti concert. The plaudits and encores pursued their course with habitual persistence. The diva not only looked and sang her best, but wore her brightest smile—a smile that refused to suggest gravity even when she sang her own unpretentious little ballad, "On Parting," which, indeed, proved to be less appropriate to the occasion than the "Jewel Song" and "Pur dicesti." The extraordinary *verve* that she infused into the air from "Faust" was recalled afterwards.

It was her invariable custom here to receive her personal friends during the interval, a special room nearly opposite the artists' room being set apart for the purpose. There would they gather at the end of the first half of the programme, pressing and crowding in—among them generally,

[1] This concert furnished quite a field-day for the veterans of the art. With the exception of Mme. (then Miss) Clara Butt, no exception could be named; for the soloists, in addition to Mme. Patti, comprised such long-established favorites as Edward Lloyd and Santley, while August Manns was the conductor and Wilhelm Ganz played the piano accompaniments.

despite the watchful Percy Harrison, one or two not entitled to the privilege of entrée—to salute the "Queen of Song" and congratulate her upon triumphs which, in her estimation and theirs, never grew stale. And the regal "little lady" welcomed them as befitted their degree of intimacy: some with her characteristic hearty handshake, some with embraces and resounding kisses, but all alike with grace and geniality and the "right word."

On entering the subterranean reception-room that November evening, I noticed standing by Mme. Patti's side a tall, rather thin gentleman whose face was unknown to me. As I waited while others were "paying homage," some one whispered in my ear:

"Don't you know who that is?" I shook my head. "He is Baron Rolf Cederström, who was staying at Craig-y-Nos last summer. She is introducing him to everybody."

Just then Mme. Patti caught sight of me, and I advanced to shake hands with her. As she turned to present me to the Baron, a certain possibility flashed across my mind. An instant later the mystery was solved. She said, with the happy, joyous manner of a girl of sixteen:

"This is Baron Cederström, my fiancé!"

That moment of intuitive mental preparation enabled me to suppress all semblance of surprise. I offered my congratulations with the utmost cordiality, and begged to know if the happy day had yet been fixed. No, it had not; nor would it be for some little time. The marriage would probably take place in February. (A twelvemonth would by then have passed since Nicolini's death.) The Baron looked exceedingly proud, and he smiled calmly as he glanced around.

The first public announcement of the betrothal appeared on the following morning, not in the London papers, but in the two leading provincial dailies, the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Scotsman*, for both of which I was then the metropolitan

musical correspondent. The paragraph in the former ran as follows:

> The most interesting fact in connection with the Patti concert at the Albert Hall to-night was that during the interval the prima donna seized the opportunity to privately inform her friends of her intention to get married again. The engagement will not be formally announced for some time, for scarcely a full year has yet elapsed since the death of M. Nicolini; but I am in a position to state that the happy man is Baron Cederström, a Swede of high family, who was a visitor at Craig-y-Nos Castle during the recent summer holidays. The wedding will, according to present arrangements, take place in February.

But the event was not, after all, deferred until February. It took place on January 25, 1899, in the Roman Catholic church at Brecon, the bride being given away by Sir George Faudel-Phillips. A quaint feature was the place chosen for the wedding breakfast, which was partaken of in the train on the railway journey to London. Three days later Baron and Baroness Cederström left for the Riviera and Italy, where they spent the remainder of the winter.

When Adelina Patti married for the third time she was within a few days of attaining her fifty-sixth birthday. But face and figure alike belied her age. She looked scarcely older than her Swedish spouse, and he was her junior by many years. The world regarded her new matrimonial venture with sympathetic interest. It thought her wise to have selected a husband qualified to take good care of her in her declining years, during the gradual twilight of a long career. Moreover, it was whispered that she was very much in love—that her heart had been fairly "caught on the rebound." In her case this foreshadowed a speedy remoulding of her mode of thought, of her views concerning people and things, of her feeling and

attitude in regard to home life and surroundings, under the influence of the new companion whose temperament and ideas she had brought into juxtaposition with her own. Such quickly proved to be the fact.

To what extent the consequent changes at Craig-y-Nos were due to considerations of health it would be difficult to say. At first not much, perhaps; for it was not until some time after the accomplishment of another five or six years of concert work that one began to hear of Mme. Patti's declining strength and activity, or of really serious attacks of indisposition. Nevertheless, the accustomed round of entertainments that ceased shortly before Nicolini's fatal illness was never resumed. And so the famous singer's *joie de vivre* took on a different hue. Concerts and operatic selections in the exquisite little theatre became of comparatively rare occurrence.

The Baron and Baroness Cederström travelled a great deal. They sought and found the artistic pleasures of Bayreuth. They went to the Passion Play at Oberammergau. They visited Switzerland and ascended by mountain railway to the top of the Rigi, the Bürgenstock, and other hotel-clad peaks. From these places the Baroness would write enthusiastic letters to her friends, describing her new experiences in terms of unbounded appreciation.

Another year (September, 1900) she went to Stockholm, her husband's native city, to visit his relations, who resided in the picturesque outlying suburb of Saltsjöbaden. During her stay there she appeared at a performance given in aid of a national charity at the new opera house in the Swedish capital. The superb auditorium was filled to repletion by a distinguished and representative gathering, including the King and Queen of Sweden. At the close of the evening King Oscar received Mme. Patti in the *foyer,* and pinned to her glittering corsage the insignia of the Swedish order, Literis et Artibus.

These novel excursions and pleasant trips to the Continent were not allowed, of course, to interfere with the regular routine of Mme. Patti's concert work in England under the direction of Percy Harrison. She made her first appearance at the Albert Hall after her marriage on May 19, 1899; and, as if in response to a welcome of unusual warmth, gave an astounding display of voice and art—both seemingly undimmed in lustre and charm. She subsequently sang in the same hall, season after season, generally three or four times in each year, ringing the changes upon the old favorite showpieces which her faithful admirers never wearied of hearing.[1] But never did the matchless tones again convey quite the same impression of miraculous freshness as they did in "Caro nome," in "O luce di quest' anima," in "Batti, batti," in "Pur dicesti," on that unforgettable May afternoon. In the opinion of many, it was the culminating moment of her phenomenal career as a concert vocalist.

Her last public appearance as an opera singer occurred in the winter of 1900. It did not extend to an entire opera—no more, indeed, than the Chamber Scene from "Roméo"; nor could it, for many and obvious reasons, challenge comparison with the past in the same degree as the purely vocal achievement just referred to. Still, it afforded another typical instance of the success with which Patti still defied the so-called "ravages of time."

This incident happened, appropriately enough, at Covent

[1] It may be mentioned, however, that at a later concert in the summer of 1899 Mme. Patti sang for the first time before a London audience the exacting air, "Casta diva," from "Norma," which she used to sing standing upon a table when a child of seven, as recorded in the earlier pages of this book. After the lapse of nearly half-a-century she gave it now "with a wonderful depth of pathos, rendering every phrase with her own incomparable elegance of style and unaffected grace and purity of expression."

Garden—the scene of her London début close upon thirty-nine years before—on the evening of Thursday, February 22, 1900; the occasion being a benefit performance in aid of the Marchioness of Lansdowne's War Fund for Officers' Wives and Families. It was one of the most brilliant affairs of the kind ever held in that historic building. The Prince and Princess of Wales (then soon to be King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra) headed a very remarkable gathering, and the receipts amounted to the record sum of £12,000. Mme. Patti contributed a lion's share of the programme. In the preliminary concert she gave two solos and two encores. Then the curtain rose on the "duo de l'alouette," which she sang with Alvarez, the famous French tenor, in the part of *Roméo.* Finally "God Save the Queen" was given, the first verse sung by Patti, the second by Edward Lloyd, and the third by the entire ensemble.

Once more (and for the last time) let me quote the *feuilleton* of the *Sunday Times:*

To say that Mme. Patti worked hard is to give a poor notion of the extent to which the great prima donna interested herself in and contributed to the success and *éclat* of this noteworthy event. She came to London expressly for it, and she sent specially to Paris for the three new gowns which she wore in course of the evening. She sang encores after each of her operatic airs, and lavished the full measure of her genius upon a delighted and astonished crowd. I say "astonished" because the word fitly expressed the feelings with which old opera habitués gazed upon the still young-looking face of the diva and listened to the ever-fresh tones of her incomparable voice what time she bridged a quarter of a century with her girlish yet tragic embodiment of *Juliette.* Although it had ended all too soon, the *duo* left behind the exquisite fragrance of an enchantment long past and yet again renewed. . . . In an artistic sense, the scene from "Roméo" was essentially the *clou* of the entertainment.

CHAPTER XXI

Patti's Later Contemporaries—Her Unchallenged Supremacy—Sembrich and Melba Compared—Charity Work in Paris (1901)—Time and the Diva—Health, Voice, and Art—Last American Tour (1903–04)—A New Manager and a New Generation—Meeting the Baroness at Quarantine—She Lands and Is Interviewed—She Sings at Carnegie Hall—A Four-Months' Tour—Good-bye to America—Return to England—A Faithful Public—President Loubet Bestows the Legion of Honor in Paris—Last Years of Patti's Career—Preparations for Retirement—Farewell at the Albert Hall (1906)—The Programme—An Audience in Tears—Historic Leave-Taking—A Famous Critic's Eulogium of the Great Singer

THE birth of the twentieth century found Adelina Patti still securely established upon the lofty pedestal to which the will of two continents had elevated her decades before. Fifty years exactly had passed since the child of seven had sung to her first audience; and for forty years out of the fifty she had been the foremost singer of her age. She was still the living standard whereby every new prima donna had perforce to be measured—that is to say, every prima donna ambitious enough to sing Patti's rôles upon the boards where Patti herself had sung them.

For the opera-lovers of her day had good memories, and were perhaps a shade more loyal to their favorites than the differently nurtured public of a later era. Besides, the glory of the great singer had not yet departed, even if the stage knew her no more. Her voice and art were still to be heard in the land, and the impression made by their beauty was yet vivid and actual.

And, for her part, what experiences, what triumphs, what conquests had been hers! What changes, what developments

in musical life and thought, had come within her purview! Together with a distinct forward movement upon the lines of the lyric drama, what steady deterioration had she witnessed, alas! in her own branch of the singer's art.[1]

Her retentive memory also enabled *her* to keep fresh in mind all that she cared to remember. With an equal facility she could dismiss from her recollection whatever incident, whatever person or object, she wished to forget. The memory of her early struggles and vicissitudes always remained strong and clear; and to the congenial listener she would dwell upon them with evident pleasure. Her artistic life was no more a sealed book to others than it was to herself. She referred to it, as she had always done, without reluctance or hesitation. If any difference might be noted, it was in her growing tendency to laud and admire certain "giants of the past" whom she had not always, as a rule, admitted to be giants. In the absence of successors, they now loomed upon the slowly obscuring horizon as eminently gigantic. For the age of the *bel canto* was departing; and, with a lessening demand for old-fashioned Italian opera, the call for worthy interpreters—even were it possible to perpetuate their line—had inevitably to diminish in proportionate measure.

And what of her own *fin-de-siècle* contemporaries? Among these Sembrich and Melba were, perhaps, the only sopranos whom Patti considered capable of upholding the exalted traditions of the fading school. There were still *coloratur* singers, but very few of them artists of the first rank, and not one whose vocal and histrionic resources would permit her to cover the same wide operatic field that the diva's versatile genius had enabled her to adorn. Both Sembrich and Melba were endowed with lovely voices, rare charm, and great beauty of style; but their limitations as prime donne stood out clearly when they were compared with the supreme artist who had

[1] See Appendix CC.

(Above) CASKET PRESENTED WITH THE FREEDOM OF BRECON

(Below) CASKET PRESENTED WITH THE FREEDOM OF SWANSEA

made her European début a full generation before they came upon the scene.

Both were admirable vocalists. Sembrich, an accomplished musician and wonderful *Lieder*-singer, never miscalculated her powers or essayed operatic parts for which she was either physically or temperamentally unfitted. A clever actress and an artist to the finger-tips, she could always satisfy the most exacting critic in any rôle, serious or comic, that she undertook. In this respect Melba was not always so discriminating. She attempted parts—*Carmen* and *Sieglinde,* for instance—in which she had not the remotest chance of succeeding. She was not endowed, either, with comic talent (which Sembrich, like Patti, possessed in a remarkable degree); while her dramatic gifts, if adequate for certain parts, never rose beyond a certain restricted level of tragic intensity.

On the other hand, Melba was a born singer. Her tone was exquisitely sweet and silvery, her scale a miracle of smoothness and equality, her vocalization delightfully pure and effortless. Merely to shut one's eyes and listen to her was like enjoying the song of a canary or a thrush.[1] She was at her

[1] Writing of Melba on her first appearance in America in 1893, which took place five years after her operatic début, Mr. Krehbiel said in his "Chapters of Opera": "Her voice was charmingly fresh and exquisitely beautiful. Her tone-production was more natural, and quite as apparently spontaneous, as that of the wonderful woman [Patti] who so long upheld the standard of *bel canto* throughout the world."

The meaning of the word "natural," as used here, is not quite clear. It would have been impossible for any vocal production to be "more natural" than Patti's, because it was the one gift, of all her gifts, that was untouched throughout her life by either art or "artifice." The peculiarly dark timbre which was its most individual characteristic was—so contemporary evidence has told us—already hers in childhood. Her teacher, Barili, had not to impart either this or any other "trick" that could affect the course of nature so far as her actual tone-production was concerned. On the other hand, Melba's "natural" way of singing was such that when she first sang in public it was objected that her medium suffered from an excess of *voix blanche.* She had to work very hard to correct this, and she had about succeeded in doing so at the

best in her lighter characters, and in these, as well as in the interpretation of certain lyric rôles—or parts of *mezzo carattere*, as the Italians classify them—her unchallenged position at Covent Garden in the nineties practically corresponded to that of Sembrich at the Metropolitan Opera House.

In the realm of opera, therefore, Patti was still without either peer or successor, and, so far as the present chronicler can determine, she was destined to remain so. With the concert platform she had not yet finished; but her appearances were gradually to become less frequent. In 1901 she was heard at the Albert Hall only twice—in June and November—and the provincial tours were rather shorter than usual. She went to Paris in April and sang at a concert organized by *Le Petit Journal* in aid of the Caisse des Secours Immédiats. The Gaieté Théâtre was crowded on that occasion by an aristocratic audience, and ovations, recalls, and flowers were lavished upon her with the old abundance. Said the Paris correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph:* "Whether Mme. Patti is still capable of supporting the weight of a great rôle upon the stage is a question which critics may discuss; but after hearing the great *cantatrice* sing to-day, one cannot but declare that it is impossible to render such selections with greater art."

In 1902 it was much the same story: concert work in more restricted measure, but still no falling off in enthusiasm on the part of a public ever loyal to its lifelong favorite. The watchful and expert observer could alone perceive the significance of the modifications that were now taking place. So slow, so gradual, were they as to be almost imperceptible. And so long as the velvety tones remained, so long as the

time when she made her début in New York. It may be conceded, however, that the darker timbre sounded just as "natural" to the new listener as the over-light timbre that had originally prevailed.

delicious *legato* and the indescribable Patti manner continued in evidence, what did Londoners care? An extra breath here and there; a transposition of a semitone down or maybe two,[1] fewer excursions—and those very "carefully" managed—above the top line of the treble stave; some diminution of resonant power or of sustained vigor in the higher medium notes—what were these, after all, but trifles when one could still derive so much pleasure from the superlative qualities that Patti, and Patti alone, possessed?

The critics, of course, observed these things; but, showing creditable delicacy and consideration, either passed them by or touched upon them so lightly that their little reservations almost escaped attention. They emphasized only what could still be admired. Thus one journal: "It may not be maintained that Adelina Patti's voice is as brilliant, as extensive in compass, as full of youthful fire, as in the old days that are gone; but it is still happily a fact," etc. Again, later on: "Nothing is more painful than to watch the gradual decay of some great leviathan of art. With Mme. Patti the case is different. True, her high notes are not what they once were; but her singing is still far and away finer than that of any soprano of the same character now before the public. There is a personal charm in her voice which never leaves it, even when she is singing florid music." [2]

It is doubtful whether at this epoch the illustrious artist was herself realizing the exact nature and extent of the effect that the slowest "wear and tear" is bound ultimately to impose upon the most perfectly adjusted human organization. Her general health had somewhat improved, but she was still subject to periodical attacks of rheumatism and

[1] As a rule, this had not been necessary. Twenty years earlier, when in New York, she wrote to a friend: "I never transpose the 'Jewel Song' in 'Faust' a key lower. I always sing it in its original key, and sometimes a key higher; for it is very low for me as it is written."

[2] The *Daily News*, 1902; 1903.

neuralgia—attributed by one of her medical advisers to the frequently damp atmosphere of the Swansea Valley.

On this account, perhaps, there was at one moment serious talk of selling Craig-y-Nos Castle, and early in 1901 the estate was actually in the market. A high price was asked, however, and as no attractive offer was forthcoming, the place was withdrawn from the agents' hands. Truth to tell, none but the most vital considerations would have induced its owner to relinquish her lovely home, and, after the first impulse to sell it had passed, the idea was never broached again.

Early in 1903 a suggestion of another kind penetrated the mountain fastness of the Baroness Cederström, and was to meet with a more favorable response. For yet once again, before the end of her busy life, was she tempted to cross the Atlantic—to bid a very last farewell ("in concert," naturally) to the land of her childhood.

The conception of this supplementary *tournée* (or "extra turn," as one irreverent American writer called it) seems to have originated in the fertile brain of Marcus R. Mayer, Mme. Patti's trustworthy manager on more than one bygone visit to the United States. But it was not altogether on his own account—owing, it was understood, to certain financial obstacles—that the veteran manager "worked the oracle" in this instance. It might have prospered better, perhaps, had the scheme and its execution rested entirely in his hands. Under no conceivable circumstances, however, could a Patti tour in America, undertaken at this late day, have been calculated to result in one of the brilliant successes associated with the never-to-be-forgotten past.

Nine years had elapsed since her preceding visit, which Americans had been bidden to regard as definitely final. It was a long interval. A new generation had sprung up that

knew not Patti, yet had heard of her all their lives. Doubtless they expected her to return the same unapproachable diva as of yore, with the same glorious, birdlike voice of wondrous power, with the same youthful mien—in fact, all that their elders had described to them a thousand times. This was not England, where she had never ceased to shine in the public eye, where the passage of time had not been noted because the marvel of its defiance had endured under the unbroken observation of the people. To Britons she was—indeed, might well be—the same inimitable, unchangeable Patti. In the United States—above all, in hard, practical, critical, blasé New York—nothing short of a miracle could have so bridged those years of absence that expectation should be fully realized and leave no sense of disappointment.

Sixty concerts were to be given within a period of six months, and for each concert Mme. Patti was to be paid $5,000, besides an additional fifty per cent. of the receipts on any amount over $7,500. Further allowances for travelling expenses, hotels, etc., were stipulated for, and it was agreed that a deposit of $40,000 (£8,000) should be paid into a London bank as guaranty by the beginning of March, 1903. On these conditions the contract was signed, and Mme. Patti duly found herself engaged for one more long American tour to a new manager—to wit, Mr. Robert Grau, the younger brother of Henry E. Abbey's former partner, Maurice Grau, who had been for some time director of the Royal Opera at Covent Garden (after the death of Harris), and impresario of the Metropolitan Opera House, New York.

This Robert Grau, like Marcus Mayer, did not labor in his own behalf alone, but as the head of a syndicate formed for the purpose of carrying out the Patti enterprise. Heretofore he had been known in New York as an agent connected with the theatrical and "vaudeville" (or music-hall) business. Of operatic artists and concert management he had lit-

tle, if any, experience. However, with Marcus Mayer as his acting manager and the further assistance of a capable press-agent, he planned his tour and fixed his dates. Then he "put up" his deposit, and proceeded to "trust to luck" and the magic name of Adelina Patti.

I happened to be living in New York at the time. I had corresponded only at rare intervals with the Baroness Cederström since her marriage. She had, however, given me some charming letters of introduction when I went to America in December, 1901, and we were still excellent friends. The news that she was coming over aroused feelings of pleasure at the thought of seeing and hearing her once again.

On a breezy morning in October, 1903, I went with Robert Grau and Marcus Mayer, on board a revenue cutter, to meet the Baroness and her husband at quarantine. She received us in her state-cabin with the utmost cordiality. She declared she had enjoyed the trip and was feeling well.

Our greetings over, one or two press men came to the door and desired to know if they might "put a few queries"; but Mme. Patti refused to be interviewed until after she had arrived at her hotel. There, she said, she intended to receive all of the journalists "in a bunch" and undergo the fire of their collective interrogatories at one sitting. She asked me what the papers were saying; whether so-and-so and so-and-so were still writing for the *New York* ——? I told her they were gossiping very little about her visit, but that Mr. Grau's press-agent had been extremely busy. "*Eh bien, nous verrons!*" was her reply.

At the dock, where there was a huge crowd, the people welcomed her with a cheer as she descended the gang-plank leaning on the arm of Marcus Mayer. They seemed, however, well-nigh as anxious to catch a glimpse of Baron Cederström, who had not visited New York before. It was late in

the afternoon before we reached the Savoy Hotel; but the Baroness declined to take any repose, preferring to "have it out" with the interviewers forthwith. She asked me to remain, and I was an amused witness of some pretty passages-at-arms between the diva and her eight or ten questioners.

She understood their game of carte-and-tierce thoroughly; parried their delicate thrusts with infinite tact; gave out just as much information as she cared to, no more; dwelt emphatically, of course, upon her delight at being in New York again; and reiterated the assurance that no previous "farewell" had been the real, absolute farewell that this one was to be. Next day's interviews with Mme. Patti were the first that had done any appreciable service to the tour.

It was a concert at Carnegie Hall on November 4, 1903, that marked the "beginning of the end" of Adelina Patti's long association with the city of New York. No one present on that day had heard her sing at Tripler's Hall in 1850, when a wonder-child of seven.[1] It was doubtful, moreover, whether any one was there who had witnessed her début in opera at the Academy of Music in 1859. Probably not more than a third of the vast audience that now thronged Carnegie Hall had known the joy of listening to Patti in her prime, or even when she had sung in opera at the Metropolitan fourteen years before. To all intents and purposes, it was a new public—and essentially a critical one. A public that still loved its Sembrich, but was caring less and less for her school; that could enjoy brilliant *coloratur* and elegant *nuances,* but raved far more loudly over opulence of vocal tone and strenuous (Wagnerian) declamation. To such an assemblage the ordinary miscellaneous programme was not calculated to appeal very strongly.[2]

[1] The lady referred to in Chapter III was still living, but an invalid and unable to leave her room. She died in 1905.

[2] It consisted of the usual heterogeneous selection of show-pieces

Mme. Patti had a magnificent reception. She was very nervous at the outset, and unable to do herself justice. As a natural consequence her voice did not carry so well as usual in the big hall, although its lovely quality was unchanged, particularly in the more *cantabile* phrases. Later on she recovered her control and sang "Home, sweet home" with all the wondrous charm of yore.

The tour lasted about four months and comprised forty concerts. It brought Mme. Patti a net profit of £50,000 ($250,000) — under the circumstances a remarkable financial result. In spite of the fatigue and risks of constant travelling, Mme. Patti was only once prevented by illness from appearing, namely, at Chicago, where she had an attack of sore throat. In February she paid her return visit to New York, and early in March bade her ultimate adieu to that city. She was now heard to much better advantage. The impression she left behind was one of astounding juvenility and extraordinary preservation of vocal power in an artist who had been singing in public for well over half-a-century. On her departure for Liverpool many friends again assembled to see her off. She seemed in the best of health and spirits, and it was plain that she was glad to be going home.

So far as America was concerned, the reign of Patti was over.

In England, too, the end was drawing near. Her appearances in public after her return grew few and far between. Not that the audiences failed her now more than in the past or acclaimed her with an iota less of the old rapture. She was simply losing the relish for work; the fatigue of railway

executed by artists of various grades of talent. The performers engaged by Robert Grau to assist on this tour were Miss Kathleen Howard (contralto), Mr. Wilfred Virgo (tenor), Mr. Claude Cunningham (baritone), Miss Vera Margolies (piano), Miss Rosa Zamels (violin), Mr. Anton Hegner ('cello), and Signor Romualdo Sapio (conductor).

travel was growing more irksome; the duty of practising and keeping in good voice was becoming something of a burden—that was all. But it was enough. Moreover, once she realized that there were now defects beyond her control, that the flaws in her once peerless singing were such as the people could readily perceive,—even though they as readily overlooked them for the sake of what still remained of her matchless voice and art,—then Adelina Patti was not the artist to run for long the risk of outstaying her welcome.

Yet, to be exact, the gradual process of retirement took two and a half years from June 11, 1904, the date of Mme. Patti's first concert at the Albert Hall subsequent to her return from the United States. On that occasion she was unfortunately suffering from a severe attack of neuralgia, and was not really fit to sing. Imagine the courage and determination requisite to conquer this most trying kind of physical agony, and withal to get through seven pieces (four of them encores), including the "Jewel Song," "Batti, batti," "Pur dicesti," "Angels ever bright and fair," and "Voi che sapete"! Such an exacting effort under these conditions was not without a detrimental effect, and it is worthy of mention that she did not appear again in London for a whole year.

Let it also be noted that some of the metropolitan critics, while apparently uninformed about the attack of neuralgia, did not carry their customary indulgence to the length of ignoring the contrast between former perfection and present shortcomings. It was done in a polite and kindly fashion; but it was a novel experience. Surprising to relate, she afforded the same critics much less chance for following up their new line in the summer of 1905. She had recovered a great deal of her physical strength, and, being in altogether better voice, instantly regained some of the lost ground.

The *Morning Post* welcomed her return and said: "The art of the *bel canto* has had many glorious exponents, but

among these Mme. Patti, by universal consent, occupies a unique place, and the wish that she may soon appear again is one that will doubtless be echoed far and wide.'' In the *Standard* one read: ''With her own special charm of personality, her wonderfully finished vocalization, and her vivacity, she drew from her delighted admirers the most enthusiastic applause. . . . Save in the upper register, her wonderful voice shows little sign of the passage of time.'' And this last remark, even then, was perfectly true.

In April of the same year (1905), shortly after singing again at the Paris Gaieté in aid of the Caisse des Secours Immédiats, Baroness Cederström had conferred upon her the ribbon of the Legion of Honor. The distinction was one that she well deserved at the hands of the French nation, but might never have received but for the powerful initiative of M. Cassigneul, the director of *Le Petit Journal* and founder of the above-named charity, for which a large sum of money had been collected through her coöperation. It was M. Delcassé who submitted to President Loubet the decree nominating the famous *cantatrice* a ''foreign member of the Légion d'Honneur.'' In appending his signature thereto the President uttered the following remark: ''I do this with as much pleasure as I experienced long ago when I had no gray hairs, and when I heard Adelina Patti sing in 'Lucia' and 'La Sonnambula.' ''

On October 23 Baroness Cederström redeemed her promise to give another concert at Cardiff in aid of the Welsh charities. The net proceeds amounted to £750. Three weeks later she was again appearing at the Albert Hall before the customary ''sea of expectant faces.''

We come now to 1906, the year of Patti's retirement. It is noteworthy that when she sang in London in the month of June not a word had been written to indicate that the mo-

ment of final parting was close at hand. The notices of that concert dealt no less gently than of yore with the public's "perennial favorite"; with the " 'Queen of Song' *par excellence*, who once more was able to delight her hearers by the wonderful fluency of her vocalization and to revive memories of former operatic triumphs."[1]

Not until September, indeed, did it become known that she had definitely decided to retire into private life, and that, after a farewell concert at the Albert Hall in December, she would take leave of her admirers in the provinces during the autumn of 1907. This announcement was fulfilled to the letter, although she supplemented the tour in question by reappearing at the Albert Hall in the following November at Mr. Percy Harrison's "benefit" concert. Every celebrated popular singer is expected to emerge from his or her retirement, and the Baroness Cederström generously did so—for somebody or other's benefit—on a good many occasions.

To the use of the word "farewell" in connection with this concert some objection was taken—by the artist herself because the term was one that had been much abused; and by her English manager because she had already promised to sing subsequently at his "benefit" after her last tour under his direction. It is difficult, however, to see how it could have been called anything but a "farewell," since it was intended to mark the close (in London) of Mme. Patti's professional career; and, despite a letter from Mr. Harrison on the subject, the newspapers insisted upon describing the coming event under the head-line in question. It served, moreover, to whet public interest and create a tremendous demand for seats. The concert was duly announced to take place at the Albert Hall on Saturday afternoon, December 1.

As the date approached, the daily and weekly journals, almost without exception, published biographical articles deal-

[1] The *Morning Post*, June 15, 1906.

ing with the diva's unique lifetime of fifty-six years upon the concert platform and the operatic stage. They included some rather remarkable "copy," deserving of greater credit for eulogistic intention than accuracy of historical detail.

Guesses as to her income generally made out that from 1861 to 1881 she had earned from £30,000 to £35,000 per annum; which was probably not very wide of the mark. But after that the writers seem to have had no sort of line to go upon. She never lived up to her income, and the interest on her capital amply sufficed to meet her expenditure. In any case, she was considered to be the richest prima donna the world had known.

Had she been induced to make gramophone records ten years before she did, her income from that source would have been very large. But she felt a curious aversion against the new-fangled toy, as she regarded it, and consistently refused to follow the example of Tamagno, Sembrich, Melba, and Caruso. The leading gramophone companies tried every available device, even following her to her hotels when she went abroad; but she declined to be caught, until at last one day, in sheer despair, she turned to her most persistent petitioner and said, "Well, if you will go to my solicitor, Sir George Lewis, and arrange everything with him, I will do whatever he agrees to."

The conditions imposed by Sir George were simple. "You will have to take your entire apparatus down to Craig-y-Nos Castle; have it ready for immediate use; and wait there from day to day until the Baroness says she is willing to sing for you." It was done. But many days passed ere the fateful hour struck and the Baroness declared herself ready. Then, with her accustomed ardor, she threw herself heart and soul into the business, and did not desist until she had made eight or ten excellent records. Those were the only ones she ever made, and the royalties on them were regularly paid—accord-

ing to agreement—through Sir George Lewis, whom the world has probably to thank for being able still to hear even so much of the voice that was once Patti's.

Happily her feeling towards the gramophone changed from the moment when she first heard her own records. This was two or three days after she had finished making them. The Baroness was coming down to déjeuner, and descending the main staircase to the hall (where the instrument had cunningly been placed), when the tones of her own voice fell for the first time upon her ear. One who was present relates that she stopped, turned visibly pale, clutched at the banisters, and remained where she was standing until the piece was finished. Then she ran quickly down the stairs to the hall, and exclaiming, "Oh, you darling!" threw her arms round the horn of the gramophone. Her aversion had been conquered by her own voice.

The most interesting of the farewell articles was the one from the pen of Joseph Bennett which appeared in the columns of the *Daily Telegraph*.[1] It almost made amends for the omission of any biographical or anecdotal reference to Patti in that critic's "Forty Years of Music"—an omission explained (but not accounted for) on page 123 of the book. He says there:

> Shortly before this chapter was written (November, 1906), Adelina Patti—to call her by her first and best known name—retired from public life as a professional singer.[2] The withdrawal may not be final, but it does not affect my rule to keep from this book all personal recollections of living people.

The rule, however, was evidently of the sort that can as easily be broken as observed—*vide* pages 257–8 of the same book. One other allusion only does Bennett make therein to

[1] See Appendix DD.

[2] There is a slight discrepancy here. Mme. Patti's retirement from public life did not actually take place until the month *after* that in which Bennett wrote his chapter.

Adelina Patti, namely, when he quotes a letter (dated July 24, 1867) from Maurice Strakosch inviting him to dinner:

"You should much oblige Mlle. Patti and myself by giving us the pleasure of dining with us Friday next at half-past six. You will meet our common friend, A. S. S."

So it was because he met Arthur S. Sullivan, not because he dined with Patti, that Bennett included Strakosch's letter in his "Forty Years of Music"!

Well might the writers who witnessed and recorded the formal leave-taking at the Albert Hall, on a cold December afternoon in 1906, claim for it the dignity of an historic event. It was in a sense more historical than formal. It marked the ending of an unparallelled career; yet so simple was the function that it presented scarcely any features to differentiate it from an ordinary familiar Patti concert. A bigger crowd, if possible; a more tense emotion in the air; a fuller measure of excitement and enthusiasm; perhaps a larger display of floral tributes. Otherwise, what? Let the programme tell the tale:

PART I

Great Organ—Fugue on "Bach," Op. 60, No. 1 . . . *Schumann*
Mr. H. L. Balfour

Air—"Through the Forest" (*Der Freischütz*) . . . . *Weber*
Mr. Ben Davies

Aria—"Voi che sapete" (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) . . . . *Mozart*
Mme. Adelina Patti

Solo Piano—
Miss Elsie Horne

Recit. and Aria—"Ombra mai fù" . . . . . *Handel*
Mme. Ada Crossley

Solo Violin—Lento, Gavotte, and Presto . . . . . *Bach*
Señor Sarasate

Song—"La Serenata" . . . . . *Tosti*
Mme. Adelina Patti

PART II

Great Organ—"Melody" . . . . . *J. A. West*
Mr. H. L. Balfour

Song—"A Garden of Love" . . . . . *Guy D'Hardelot*
Mr. Ben Davies

Vocal Waltz—"Il Bacio" . . . . . *Arditi*
Mme. Adelina Patti

Solo Piano—
Miss Elsie Horne

Song—"Through Love to Light" . . . . . *Cuthbert Wynne*
Mme. Ada Crossley

Solo Violin—"Jota de Pablo" . . . . . *Sarasate*
(First performance in England)
Señor Sarasate

Great Organ—New March, "Newquay" . . . . *H. C. Tonking*
Mr. H. C. Tonking

It would be sheer insincerity to argue that this scheme was worthy of an historic event. It may or may not have been the best that could be compiled under the circumstances. Anyhow, the farewell itself, not the music that it brought forth, was what made history of that day's proceedings. It was not what Patti sang, but the feeling that they were listening to her for the last time, that brought the lump to people's throats and the tears to their eyes until they grew hysterical and clapped and shouted till they could clap and shout no more. They probably did not miss the worn-out *chevaux de bataille* of Rossini, Donizetti, or Verdi. Enough that Patti was bidding them good-bye, that they would know no more the spell of her singing in "Home, sweet home." It was, after all, a saddening, nay, a painful reflection that they might never again feel the thrill of her luscious *voix d'or*.

There was something, too, besides the voice and the sing-

ing that made the vast assemblage cling lovingly to those last precious moments. There was the remarkable "personality whose power, impalpable and indefinable," one veteran critic of this concert justly declared to be "no less important in the public performer than a highly finished technical and artistic accomplishment. When these are combined in one person, then we recognize the true artist and the historic personage. In Mme. Patti they are combined in an almost superlative degree."[1]

The writer went on:

Will any deny her right to be described as historic? Certainly none who have heard her, year in, year out, for nearly two generations, during which the art that she has so long adorned has undergone something like a complete change, and with it public opinion of it. Yet, in spite of this, the diva has gone on her way, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, untouched by the transitions of music or musical life, singing largely the music of a bygone day, yet singing it as she only could sing it. And none, surely, would have it otherwise.

To praise her singing is almost an impertinence, yet not a soul in that vast crowd on Saturday but must have asked himself where, as song after song was delivered, the equal of that singing, the rarest beauty of phrasing, the perfection of the technical command, and the grace and elegance of the style were again to be heard.

One little instance. Will any forget that literally marvellous trill —not in the least like that of the proverbial bird, but a lovely human thing—which Mme. Patti uttered at the close of "Pur dicesti," given as an encore after Tosti's "Serenata"? Whether as the result of the Wagnerisation of the singing art, and the advent of the modern declamatory style, need not be argued; certain it is that to Mme. Patti one had to go—and, alas, can go no longer—to find its possibility.

[1] The *Daily Telegraph*, December 3, 1906. This notice was not signed, but beyond a doubt it was from the pen of Joseph Bennett.

And so the inimitable *maestria* of the bygone vocal epoch asserted itself to the very end. Never mind the rest. It is good to have it on record that whatever the great songstress did on that day of farewell—however simple and unpretentious its nature—was done in her own unapproachable manner. The setting sun touched the horizon, not in midsummer glory, but in the calm, clear effulgence of a soft, gentle, wintry sky. There were no more *feux d'artifice* to trick the ear or dazzle the spectator. Opera and its *fioriture* were done with. With such straightforward melodies as "Robin Adair," "Comin' thro' the rye," and "Home, sweet home," added for encores, the final return to the simplicity of the early ballad days was neither inappropriate nor unjustified.

But, as another critic observed, "If music-lovers will always cherish those last sweet notes, Patti will remember with still greater emotion the affectionate cheers, the demonstrations of loving regard which marked her farewell." Never before or since has such a testimony of personal adoration of a public artist been witnessed within the spacious amphitheatre of the Albert Hall. A veritable cascade of flowers began pouring upon the platform after the first song, and by the end of the afternoon it had filled the entire available space, so that there was only just room for Mme. Patti and Mr. Ganz at the grand piano. Among these floral tributes was a huge seven-pointed star nearly eight feet in height, made of yellow chrysanthemums, and lighted at each point with an electric lamp. It symbolized the fact that the greatest star of her time remained shining and active to the end.

Such were the ultimate material tokens of the bond that had united the "Queen of Song" and her British subjects during the lengthy span of five-and-forty years. The pathos of the ultimate adieu proved trying for the singer and for many hundreds among her audience of nine thousand. They were palpably affected, and the handkerchiefs that waved

"good-bye" served also to wipe away the ready tears. Then the people slowly departed; and, to quote again: "As we filed out into the cold evening air a voice in the multitude was heard to murmur:

> "'God sent His singers upon earth
> With songs of sadness and of mirth,
> That they may touch the hearts of men—'

Surely this was one of them."

CHAPTER XXII

An Epilogue of Thirteen Years—Period of Tranquillity and Repose—New Scenes Visited—The Bayreuth Festival—Patti and Wagner—Her Retentive Memory—First Meeting with the Prince of Wales Recalled—A Last "Barbiere" in Private—Reappearance at Benefit Concerts—Her Welsh Charities—Failing Health—The Passing Away of Patti—A Final Appreciation

THE curtain had been rung down upon the closing public episode of Patti's romantic reign, so far as it was to be enacted within the gaze or ken of a still curious and interested public. But nearly thirteen years were yet to elapse before the termination of that tranquil epilogue which subsequently ran its uneventful course "behind the scenes." The end came very rapidly and peacefully, after a brief illness, on the morning of Saturday, September 27, 1919, at Craig-y-Nos Castle.

To attempt an account of these concluding years would be to intrude upon the privacy of a retirement that was meant, for excellent reasons, to be real in every sense. The greater part of the time was spent in Wales; but rarely if ever was the castle the scene of festivities on the old-fashioned scale. The Baron and Baroness Rolf Cederström thoroughly enjoyed the quietude of the life at Craig-y-Nos, and preferred its bucolic pleasures to the excitement of entertaining or even to the joys of the little theatre.

In the summer they generally went abroad, and made a point of never missing a Bayreuth Festival. The music of Wagner possessed a fascination for the Baroness that seemed to grow with the fulfilment of her longing to listen to it. The Baron and Baroness paid a visit to Wahnfried during

one of these pilgrimages to the Wagnerian Mecca, and were received with "special honors."

In any case, no amount of gossip could attenuate by the smallest degree the great singer's admiration for the later works of Wagner. In a letter to the author, dated September 10, 1892, she says:

"How I enjoyed 'Parsifal!' How gloriously they give it at Bayreuth; in fact, all the performances (including the 'Ring') were admirable!"

Again in another letter she writes:

"I must tell you how immensely impressed I was by the Bayreuth performances. I could never have imagined anything so perfect as the *mise en scène*, and I thought the 'Ring' simply *divine*. There are no words to express it; it is all so wonderful and beautiful."

Once, after one of these Bayreuth visits, the Baron and Baroness were on their way to the South of Italy, when the train stopped for a few minutes at Orvieto, a station between Rome and Naples. On the platform the Baron met Dr. Hans Richter, who was delighted to hear that they had been to Bayreuth. "But you know," exclaimed the Baron, "my wife is extremely fond of Wagner." Whereupon the famous conductor observed, in his usual bluff manner, "If she did not love him she would not be the great artist that she is!"

Her memory was singularly clear and accurate concerning those incidents of her life that had really impressed her. It seldom played her false, and it remained retentive to the last. She would smile at some of the anecdotes told about her by busy and irrepressible newspaper men on both sides of the Atlantic, but did not care sufficiently to take the necessary steps to correct or contradict what was untrue. "Let them write what they please," she would say. "It cannot hurt me, and if it is too stupid the public will not believe it."

As has been remarked already, she was not particularly fond of becoming reminiscent, but when the humor seized her it was of the early days in America that she liked best to speak. She never forgot, for instance, the occasion when she first sang "Casta diva" to her family, standing upon a table; or being taken to hear Jenny Lind; or the excitement of her début as a child of seven at Tripler's Hall, New York; or her first appearance in opera ten years later at the Academy of Music; or being introduced to the Prince of Wales at Philadelphia shortly after the notable event just mentioned (in 1860), when his Royal Highness was paying his first visit to the United States.

During a visit to Paris, in May, 1907, the Baroness Cederström afforded welcome proof that, notwithstanding her retirement, she still possessed a remarkable reserve of both physical energy and vocal resource. This she did by appearing at a private performance of "Il Barbiere," given in the small theatre attached to M. Jean de Reszke's house in the Rue de la Faisanderie. It was a wonderfully interesting evening; for the group of artists, apart from the diva (we may still call her by her old title) in her favorite part of *Rosina,* included Edouard de Reszke as *Don Basilio,* Signor Anselmi as *Almaviva,* Signor Ancona as *Figaro,* and Signor Pini-Corsi as *Don Bartolo.* She was now in her sixty-fifth year, and in excellent voice; she sang with a vigor and beauty of tone that her old friend Jean described as "simply miraculous." This was the last time that Adelina Patti appeared on the stage in a complete representation of an opera.

In England, in November, 1907, barely a year after her "farewell," she kept her promise and sang before an enormous audience at the Albert Hall for the benefit of her former manager,—or impresario, as he loved to dub himself,—Percy Harrison. It may go without saying that old pieces were

drawn upon and familiar scenes reënacted with the wonted ardor—"only more so." For the art of the singer had undergone no change, and the freshness of the well-remembered voice seemed more than ever unaccountable. Another phenomenal veteran, Sir Charles Santley, then seventy-three years of age, appeared at the concert, and gave a similar wonderful exhibition of powers still unimpaired; Mme. Ada Crossley and Mr. Ben Davies completing a memorable vocal quartet.

Reference has been made to Mr. Percy Harrison's long association with Mme. Patti. In December, 1914, some three years before he died, he was asked by the author to state exactly how long this had lasted. His reply (dated from Birmingham) expressed regret that he could not at that moment obtain access to old papers and could only speak from memory. He went on to say:

"I commenced my Subscription Concerts here in Birmingham in 1870, and I see that Mme. Patti sang for me on September 25, 1874, that being, I believe, the first occasion when she appeared at my usual Subscription Concerts. But I have some idea that she sang for my late uncle before then—whether once only or oftener I cannot remember. Subsequently to 1874 I again engaged the diva, intermittently at first, but later on pretty nearly every year, until her retirement from her professional career in 1906."

The enthusiasm witnessed at the Harrison benefit was renewed a year later, when the Baroness Cederström yielded to the persuasion of Father Bernard Vaughan, and took part in a concert given at the Albert Hall (November 4, 1908) to aid a scheme for the betterment of poor children in the East End of London. She had already given practical support to Father Vaughan in obtaining funds for the erection of a clubhouse for men and boys in the Commercial Road parish of St. Mary and St. Michael—a successful institution known as

"Our Lady's Home." Thanks to her present coöperation, the charitable purpose in view was fully achieved. Moreover, her personal share in the programme—listened to and cheered by some nine thousand persons—was by no means a light one, seeing that it comprised "Angels ever bright and fair," "Pur dicesti," "Voi che sapete," Gounod's "Ave Maria," Tosti's "Serenata," and the inevitable "Home, sweet home."

Soon after this she was again singing at the same place for the "farewell" of her former colleague, Mme. Albani; and yet again, at a concert given for the benefit of her old friend and faithful accompanist Wilhelm Ganz, who had been disabled in 1911 by an accident. Then, in her seventy-second year, she sang at the Albert Hall in aid of the Red Cross War Fund, on October 20, 1914, that being her last appearance in public. Altogether she gave her services for charitable and philanthropic purposes with comparative frequency during the last twenty years of her life—far more frequently, indeed, than at any other period. She was now no longer under the control of an impresario who took the narrow view that she might cheapen her value as a public artist by singing for nothing!

Her gifts to the charities of South Wales and the proceeds of the annual concerts that she gave on their behalf amounted to many thousands of pounds. She loved the old towns in the neighborhood of her home, particularly Brecon, which was the nearest, and where she had created a sensation by unexpectedly singing at the National Eisteddfod of 1889.[1] To the villagers for miles around she was a veritable Lady Bountiful. Indeed, as one of the local papers declared in its memoir of

[1] She led an assemblage of fifteen thousand persons in the singing of their national anthem, and "in the refrain the fifteen thousand voices sang as one," with an effect said to have been intensely thrilling and without parallel at these gatherings.

her: "Her benevolence was of the most profuse character, and it is no exaggeration to say that never was a woman more beloved by the simple villagers of the Swansea Valley than was Mme. Patti."

The sufferings and horrors of the Great War cast a deep shadow over the closing years of this sensitive woman's existence. She missed her journeys on the Continent, her trips to Switzerland and Bayreuth, the changes of scene to which she had grown accustomed since 1900. During the winter that followed the signing of the armistice her health began seriously to fail. Early in 1919 a medical consultation was held, and the doctors detected unmistakable signs of growing heart-weakness. She was taken to the seaside and spent her last—her seventy-sixth—birthday at Brighton. But, in spite of the most watchful care on the part of her husband and those around her, she gradually lost strength, and by the middle of September it became evident that the end was not far off. She lingered, free from all pain and partly unconscious, until the morning of the 27th, then passed quietly away with her hand clasped in her husband's. Her local medical attendant, Dr. Watson of Abercrave, was also present.

After the body had been embalmed, it lay for a while in the chapel erected a few years previously at Craig-y-Nos Castle. Thence it was removed on October 24 to London, and placed in the Roman Catholic Chapel of St. Mary's Cemetery, Kensal Green, where a short service was held on the following morning. The coffin was afterward placed in one of the catacombs in the crypt of the chapel, to await removal to the great cemetery of Père Lachaise, in Paris, where the Baroness Cederström had expressed a wish to be buried, not far from the graves of her father and her sister Amalia. For this purpose the Baron ordered to be erected a tomb worthy alike in its dignity and prominence to be the last resting-place of the illustrious singer.

It will be convenient to enumerate here the principal decorations that were conferred upon her. They were:

The Legion of Honor
Les Palmes de France
The Russian Order of Merit (in brilliants)
The Médaille de la Ville de Bruxelles
The Swedish Order, Literis et Artibus (in brilliants)
The Gold Medal of the Philharmonic Society

She was also an honorary member of innumerable musical societies and academies of distinction in various parts of the world.

The life-work of Adelina Patti was spread over the best part of the Victorian age. It stirred the hearts of three generations of music-lovers. Her active career was carried on during the most remarkable period of change and development that musical art has ever passed through—a change gradual but unceasing; a development slow but sure. With the turn of the century nothing in the vocal world had remained unaltered, and no one had stood unmoved through it all save this great singer, who resembled some lofty rock reared in the midst of a broad river and which neither stream nor rapid could budge.

Betwixt her début at Covent Garden and her exit from this earthly stage there stretched a span of hard on sixty years. Reckoning from her first appearance in opera in New York, it was exactly that. She had blossomed—the rarest flower her art ever yielded—before the American Civil War began. She lived long enough to witness the end of the biggest war in history. Truly, there were many signs that the times had changed. We will note only one. The criticisms on her early appearances in England in 1861 had filled columns of the leading papers. The obituary notices of 1919, which might

have been even more interesting, because there was so much to say about the great career that had intervened, were chiefly remarkable for their brevity and restraint. It is fair to remember that her death occurred unexpectedly, and at the outset of a gigantic railway strike which excluded almost every other topic from the pages of the newspapers. Nevertheless, one would like to know what the great editors of a bygone day would have said—and done.

It would not be correct to assert that with Patti disappeared the final link that bound the vocal past with the vocal present. Unlike Jenny Lind and Grisi, whom she followed, she has not had a successor. She was the last of the race of truly great women singers; she was the ring, the jewel—call it what you will—forming the end of a chain that has no continuance. There might be other *prime donne assolute,* other mistresses of florid or *coloratura* singing, but none who could carry on the great traditions that she so long maintained and kept alive.

This splendid succession of singers which she ended had flourished for little more than a century, all told; and she formed its most finished, its most perfect product. None of her contemporaries could compare with her in versatility, wealth of inspiration, or personal charm, much less in beauty of voice and supreme mastery of all the arts of vocalization.

She was the last perfect exemplar of the Rossini school—a school that had very nearly, perhaps already—had its day; whose sole claim to a renewed *raison d'être* would be the uprising of another genius with the transcendent gifts of an Adelina Patti to infuse new life into its dry bones. But that has not yet happened; probably never will happen.

It was not the Rossini school only, however, that derived fresh vitality from her. She was able—thanks to her marvellous faculty for imbuing the most hackneyed rôles with her own rare individuality, her own rich spontaneity of feeling—

to enhance the popularity of Bellini, Donizetti, and even Verdi. Not only did she sing their operas better than any one else, and reveal in them beauties that others let pass unnoticed, but her fascinating personality and persuasive charm imparted to their conventional heroines a new element of romance that proved as irresistible as the haunting loveliness of her voice and the brilliance of her singing.

The exquisite purity of her style brought an added grace to the simple tunes of Mozart, a more delicate polish to the suave and rapturous melodies of Gounod, an almost classical dignity to the tragic periods and pastoral refrains of Meyerbeer. In a word, she touched no figure in the operatic gallery that she did not adorn. No wonder Verdi, when asked to name his three favorite prime donne, replied: "First, Adelina; second, Adelina; third, Adelina!" In his estimation, with her *Leonora,* her *Violetta,* and her *Aïda* she literally "filled the bill."

It was never said of her that she was colorless or uninteresting; not even when she essayed the one or two parts (*Carmen,* for instance) that did not really suit her. There was a quality, a distinction about whatever she did that always raised her above the level of her colleagues, no matter how distinguished; that secured for her the centre of the stage, the concentrated and virtually exclusive attention of her audience. Apart from the fact that she was the "diva," the incomparable Patti whom every one went to see and hear, she possessed a power of magnetic attraction that never failed to make itself instantly felt, in the concert-room as in the theatre. No other vocalist of her time—with the solitary exception, maybe, of Sims Reeves—could create the "pin-drop" silence that reigned while she was singing—above all, when she was singing "Home, sweet home." With that tranquil *sostenuto* in the words and tune of a simple ballad she was wont to hold ten thousand people entranced—hold them, as it

were, in the hollow of her hand; to move and sway their emotions at her will.

She knew she had this power, and she rejoiced in it. Yet never was there a prima donna who treated her public more seriously, or would have so scorned to play tricks with them and take advantage of their love and indulgence. She proved it, first, by the fact that she so rarely disappointed them. She proved it again by the conscientious care with which she studied everything, whether an opera, an oratorio, a Wagner Song, or an ordinary drawing-room piece. For she never spared herself trouble where her art was concerned. Her reputation as an *artist* was more to her than aught else.

For the same reason, she always accounted it a blessing that she knew her own limitations well enough never to make the mistake of attempting any task that lay beyond her physical means. She would not, if she could help it, risk the humiliation of failure under any circumstances. Occasionally, as we know, at the height of her fame at Covent Garden, she allowed herself to be persuaded to appear in a mediocre opera "written specially for her" by some second-rate French composer who happened to have influence at the Tuileries. The blame for these ventures could not really be laid at her door. In later years she took pleasure in endeavoring to bring "hidden musical genius" (as she imagined it) to the light of day; and very disappointed she was when it proved not to bear the *cachet* of the real article.

Patti was always generous in her applause for her fellow artists. When they were companions on her many tours, she would encourage and help them with useful criticism. The only fault she could not pardon was stupidity. She rarely took the trouble to point out the same error a second time. She knew how to tolerate mediocrity when she could not avoid it; but it was rather from a feeling of pity than because

it did not try her patience. Very often it did. In those cases she said nothing to the offending parties, but, after considering how far their lâches affected her comfort or the artistic serenity of the ensemble, she would send for Mapleson or Percy Harrison and make the point quite clear. "You know," she would say, "I like so-and-so very much; but if there is one person in this world I cannot stand, it is an idiot or—anybody who habitually sings off the key."

The three singers whom she admired most were Jenny Lind, Alboni, and Christine Nilsson. The last-named was unquestionably her greatest rival in the esteem of the public; but they were the best of friends, and her admiration for the talent of the younger Swedish artist was whole-souled. When she died, one of the earliest and most touching messages received by her husband (Baron Cederström) was from Christine Nilsson, Countess Casa de Miranda. The peerless Alboni she loved, and thought her voice the most beautiful contralto that the world had ever known. Nor did she ever forget their wonderful duet at Rossini's funeral.

From her girlhood her adoration of Jenny Lind had grown together with her memory of that renowned singer, whom she had been taken when a child to hear in America. It was only in after years that she learned how entirely reciprocal was the admiration existing between them—the one who had been called the "Swedish Nightingale" and the one who was now known as the "Queen of Song." Once, early in the eighties, Madame Lind-Goldschmidt went to hear Patti at Covent Garden. She was accompanied by Sir Arthur Sullivan, who, when he next met Mme. Patti, asked her if she would like to know what Jenny Lind had said about her. "I would indeed," was her reply. "Well," said Sir Arthur, "she made this remark: *'There is only one Niagara; and there is only one Patti.'* " The recipient of the compliment treasured it as the greatest that had ever been bestowed upon her.

"A beautiful voice is the gift of God." These words, written by Adelina Patti in the birthday-book of a friend, at once indicate her recognition of what she herself owed to nature and the true source of that modesty which was not the least of her good qualities. For, all things considered, she was a singularly modest woman, unspoiled by adulation, wonderfully free from vanity, affectation, or self-assertiveness. Free, too, from the petty jealousies or the necessity for intrigue common to the atmosphere of the stage and the *vie d'artiste*, she commanded the sincere affection and respect of those who came into contact with her, and bore herself with queenly dignity and a sweet amiability of manner toward all alike.

So much for the woman. Of the singer what is there to say that has not already been said?

One of the main objects of this life-story has been to give a faithful idea of what Patti was like, and why she stood for half-a-century upon so exalted a pinnacle of fame and glory. There is no need to justify farther the verdict of her own public or to anticipate the opinion of posterity. It will be hard for future generations to realize, even with the aid of an "unvarnished tale" such as this, what a tremendous store their forefathers set upon the last of the "divas." Comparisons in such a case are valueless. Unluckily, I repeat, the gramophone came too late to preserve reproductions of her voice while anywhere near its prime. The records that she made (as described in the previous chapter) convey but a faint notion of the pristine splendor of its timbre. Could it ever have been conveyed?

Her singing was, nevertheless, an unalloyed delight to all who heard her, not only in her prime, but long after her career had passed its meridian; and alas! she took the secret of her wondrous art with her. Her would-be imitators found her inimitable even when they had the opportunity of

listening to her *in propriâ personâ*. They caught a pale reflex of her method and her manner; but to copy her style—the spontaneity, the glowing warmth, the impulsive energy, the inexpressible charm of Patti—of that which *was* Patti—apart altogether from her supreme technical mastery, lay far, very far beyond their power.

She was the model, the inspiration, for every operatic prima donna whose "fretful hour" upon the lyric boards coincided with her own. Not one of them was ever known to grudge her willing homage or deep, unmeasured, abiding admiration.

> And so a last farewell, O Queen of Song,
> To close the record of your glorious reign;
> Nor shall the dwellers in this poorer world
> E'er listen spellbound to your like again.

APPENDIX A

THE MUSICAL TRAINING OF ADELINA PATTI

(From the *Times*, August 7, 1884)

To the Editor of the *Times*.

Sir:

In the *Times* of July 28 it is stated that Adelina Patti was trained by a Hungarian teacher. Let me, sir, establish the truth, having been her first musical director and conductor at the Academy of Music, New York, when she appeared in opera for the first time on the night of Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 24, 1859.

She never had a Hungarian teacher. Her first teacher, when she was a child, was Signora Paravalli, an Italian prima donna; then her half-brothers Antonio and Ettore Barili. The first died in Naples some years ago, and the second is still living and teaching in New York. In the year 1859 Messrs. B. Ullmann and Maurice Strakosch were associate managers of the Academy of Music. The *prime donne* engaged by the latter in Europe, Crescimanno and Speranza, made a failure. Under the circumstances, Adelina's sister, Mme. Strakosch, suggested the idea of making the little girl appear in opera. Her husband was opposed to it, saying she was too young. I was then appealed to, and, being the musical director, the decision was left to me, and, after hearing a single piece sung by her, I concluded favourably for the début. Mr. Strakosch was invariably opposed, and the other manager, Mr. Ullmann, said: "I do like Pontius Pilate: I wash my hands. If she succeeds, so much the better for you; if not, so much the worse for you." The conditions of the engagement were stipulated with her father, Salvatore Patti, at one hundred dollars for each representation. I then began to teach her Donizetti's opera "Lucia" at Mr. Strakosch's house. After she had learned her part I announced a pianoforte rehearsal with the other artists—Brignoli, the tenor; Amadio, the

baritone; and Coletti, the basso. Everybody was pleased with her voice. At the orchestra rehearsal she surprised everybody, and she had an ovation from the musicians. At the general rehearsal, for which hundreds and hundreds of invitations had been issued, she made a sensation; and on her first appearance, on the 24th of November, 1859, she created an excitement, and she was encored in the septuor and in the Mad Scene.

After having taught her "Lucia," I did the same for "Sonnambula." Then Signor Manzocchi, a *maître de chant* of talent, prepared her for the "Barbiere di Siviglia," "Puritani," etc. Her success never abated during the two seasons she sang at the Academy of Music. The conclusion is that Mme. Adelina Patti was not trained by a Hungarian teacher, but only Italian teachers, who had the true tradition of good schools for singing, and they were Signora Paravalli, Ettore and Antonio Barili, Muzio, and Manzocchi.

Believe me, your obedient servant,

EMMANUEL MUZIO,

(Formerly Music Director of the Academy of Music, New York; of the Italiens in Paris; and at Venice, Bologna, Milan, etc., 5 Rue des Capucines, Paris.)

MAURICE STRAKOSCH'S REPLY TO THE ABOVE

To the Editor of the Times.

SIR: Under the heading "The Musical Training of Adelina Patti" a statement has recently appeared in the *Times*. Its publication proves the interest your readers take in everything that concerns that great artist. I send you a brief statement of the facts.

In October, 1843, in Vicenza, Italy, I gave a concert at which Clotilda, the [half] sister of Adelina, appeared. The child Adelina was then six months old; and from that time on, with a few exceptions mentioned later on, I was constantly with Adelina Patti until her marriage to the Marquis de Caux.

She was, so to say, born in and to the opera. Her mother was singing *Norma* when she found herself compelled to leave the stage before the last act; shortly after, Patti's baby voice was heard.[1]

[1] This part of Mr. Strakosch's statement is not exactly in accord with the known facts.

The child was with her mother at the opera even when a baby, and at the age of three years her father went to New York to direct Italian opera in that city. She could herself, when only four years old, sing many of the most difficult operatic airs almost to perfection, incredible as this may seem. Besides her mother and sisters, she heard the great artists of that day, I, then her brother-in-law, taking care that she should lose no opportunity of doing so. Among those she heard at that tender, impressionable age I may mention Jenny Lind, Grisi, Bosio, Sontag, Frezzolini, Piccolomini, Alboni, and Parepa-Rosa.

Signora Paravelli, a friend of the house, taught the child her letters, and, being a good singer and pianist, sometimes played her accompaniments when she sang.

One day, Max Maretzek, successor to Signor Patti as director, was to give a charity benefit at Tripler's Hall, New York, all his operatic artists taking part. Then and there, in 1850, Adelina Patti, not yet eight years of age, made her first public appearance, singing the "Rondo" from "Sonnambula," and Jenny Lind's "Echo Song."

I had just returned from a concert tour, and at the urgent request of her parents, who were members of my household, I organised some concerts for Adelina, and with marked success. Soon after I made an arrangement for her appearance in the concerts of the great violinist, Ole Bull, which I directed and managed, with Adelina as one of the company, some three years.

During those years she studied with me and learned over one hundred operatic selections and ballads, hearing and seeing the best vocal and dramatic artists. She never failed to sing daily her scales and exercises.

When she was between twelve and thirteen, and it was best that she should cease singing for a time, I was absent from her, engaged in writing an opera "Giovanni di Napoli," written for Mlle. Parodi, and performed in New York in 1857. During my absence, and against my advice, she made a tour in the West Indies with Gottschalk, and was gone about two years. Until I rejoined her, she studied with her half-brother, Ettore Barili, also with Signor Manzocchi, learning two operas—"Sonnambula" and "Lucia."

When she was fifteen, both her parents, thinking her ready for the

stage, and encouraged by all who heard the marvellous child, desired that she should make her operatic début. I most earnestly opposed it, assured that her voice needed rest and development. I fortunately persuaded them to postpone her appearance for one year, when I thought she could safely take a principal part in operatic performances. She studied faithfully the ensuing months, and I altered some passages in which her voice was too severely taxed, and introduced cadenzas which enabled her to employ her marvellous upper register in the two operas of "Sonnambula" and "Lucia"—cadenzas which Mme. Patti still sings without change.

She made her début on the 24th November, 1859, under my management, having one single piano and one orchestral rehearsal with my then conductor, Signor E. Muzio. She had on that first night the phenomenal success which has but continued and augmented ever since. During a period of nine years I was never absent for a day from her father and herself, nor failed to study with her. I was her sole vocal and musical instructor. During that time I had the honour of presenting her to the London public and the principal European capitals, her first appearance in London taking place on the 14th of May, 1861. And, by and by, I had no little difficulty in effecting an arrangement with the veteran manager, Mr. Gye, whose fame as an opera director will never die. I only succeeded in making an engagement which compelled Patti to sing three nights without pay, Gye reserving the right to engage her for five seasons on his own terms. He paid her the first season £150 a month, she to sing eight times — not quite £20 a night. Times have changed since then.

She studied with me from the first to the last note the following operas, and retains my cadenzas and changes at the present moment: "Barbiere di Siviglia," "Don Pasquale," "Puritani," "Elisir d'Amore," "Martha," "Don Giovanni" (*Zerlina*), "Traviata," "Trovatore," "Rigoletto," "Ernani," "Mosè in Egitto," "Othello," "Linda di Chamouni," "Dinorah," "Huguenots" (*Valentina*), "Faust," "Romeo e Giuletta," Verdi's "Giovanna d'Arco," "Don Desiderio" by Poniatowsky,[1] etc.

1 This opera was produced at Pisa in 1839 and at Paris in 1858, but there is no evidence that Patti ever sang in it.

I claim no special merit for this, as Adelina Patti had really so exceptional a talent that she would probably have achieved all that she has without me, or even more with a more competent teacher. But I must claim most positively that I was her only teacher for a year previous to her début until her marriage.

It is also my most intimate conviction that the care I was able to exercise during the development of her voice, and the unmatched solidity it acquired, not only preserved her organ but helped to make it so exceptional.

To those who would dedicate themselves to the art of song I would say, "There is but one method, that of the old Italian school." I myself was in Italy when I could hear the artists who knew the traditions of that school, and enjoyed the instruction and friendship of Chevalier Micheroux, the teacher of Pasta, whom I also knew intimately. She had retired to private life, the possessor of a large fortune, which she generously dispensed in aid of charity and art. She was living in Milan and Como, and graciously received a certain number of pupils, whom she fitted for the operatic stage when she found them sufficiently talented, while to others she gave a *dot* enabling them to marry. When they were receiving her instruction I played for her the accompaniments, and the knowledge gained from Micheroux and Pasta I imparted as far as lay in my power to Adelina Patti.

Believe me, sir, your obedient servant,

MAURICE STRAKOSCH.

Ole Bull's Island, Norway.

APPENDIX B

DEBUT OF MISS PATTI

(From the *New York Herald,* November 25, 1859)

A YOUNG lady, not yet seventeen, almost an American by birth, having arrived here when an infant, belonging to an Italian family which has been fruitful of good artists, sang last night the favorite rôle of débutantes, *Lucia di Lammermoor.*

Whether it is from the natural sympathy with the forlorn fiancée of the Master of Ravenswood which is infused into the female breast with Donizetti's tender music, or from a clever inspiration that to be unhappy and pretty is a sure passport to the affections of an audience, we cannot say. Certain it is, however, that the aspirations for the ovations, the triumphs, the glories, that await a successful prima donna almost always select this opera for their preliminary dash at the laurels. The music affords a fine opportunity to show the quality and cultivation of the soprano voice, and it is so familiar as to provoke comparison with first-rate artists, and provoke the severest criticisms by the most rigid recognized tests.

All these were duly and thoroughly applied to Miss Adelina Patti a day or two since by a very critical audience at what was called a show rehearsal. It was then ascertained that Miss Patti had a fine voice, and that she knew how to sing. The artists and amateurs were in raptures. This was a certificate to the public, who do not nowadays put their faith in managers' announcements, unless they are indorsed. With an off night and an opera worn to bits, the public interest in Miss Patti's début was so great as to bring together a very large audience, rather more popular than usual, but still numbering the best known habitués and most critical amateurs. The débutante was received politely but cordially—an indication that there was not a strong claque, which was a relief. Her appearance was that of a young lady, petite and interesting, with just a tinge of

school-room in her manner. She was apparently self-possessed, but not self-assured.

After the first few bars of recitative, she launched boldly into the cavatina—one of the most difficult pieces of the opera. This she sang perfectly, displaying a thorough Italian method and a high soprano voice, fresh and full and even throughout. In the succeeding *cabaletta,* which was brilliantly executed, Miss Patti took the high note E flat, above the line, with the greatest ease. In this *cabaletta* we noticed a tendency to show off vocal gifts which may be just a little out of place. The introduction of variations not written by the composer is only pardonable in an artist who has already assured her position.

In the duet with the tenor (Brignoli) and with the baritone (Ferri), and the Mad Scene, Miss Patti sang with sympathetic tenderness—a rare gift in one so young—and increased the enthusiasm of the audience to a positive furore, which was demonstrated in the usual way—recalls, bouquets, wreaths, etc., etc. The horticultural business was more extensive than usual.

Of course we speak to-day only of Miss Patti's qualifications as a singer. Acting she has yet to learn; but artists, like poets, are born, not made. The mere convenances of the stage will come of themselves. She is already pretty well acquainted with them. So far as her voice, skill, method, and execution are concerned, we are simply recording the unanimous opinion of the public when we pronounce the début of Miss Patti a grand success.

Everyone predicts a career for this young artist, and who knows but the managers may find in her their long-looked-for sensation?

On the same day the following curiously worded but obviously sincere notice appeared in the *New York Tribune:*

Extraordinary interest was excited last evening on the first appearance of Miss Adeline Patti, of this city, in the character of Lucia. The qualities for this rôle are full soprano voice, with absolute facility in the upper notes, thorough volatility of tone, or rapid execution, great power of holding tones, especially attenuating them to the last degree, a gentle ladylike demeanor, and to some extent

clearness of dramatic action. All these Miss Adeline Patti possesses unequivocally. She is neatly formed, with a sympathetic face; she has a good carriage and mode of holding herself in the necessary dramatic position. Her voice is clear and excellent; the brilliant execution with which she begins at the outset of her career —she is only turned of sweet sixteen—ranks with that where the best singers end. This is saying a good deal, but it is not an overstatement. . . . There is in her as much sentiment as we ought to look for in one so young. Great passion, heart-rending pathos, can only be found in the artist, whether the singer, the actor, or the orator, after an experience with the world realities, with its sadness, its sorrows. These will all come fast enough to give the tragic element to the young aspirant. . . . Miss Adeline Patti, though an American without a transatlantic puff, though a child brought up in the midst of us, a positive unqualified rich success—because she merited it. The applause from a good audience was immense; calls before the curtain and bouquets were the order of the night.

Also this excerpt from correspondence to *Dwight's Journal of Music* of the same date:

Last evening Miss Adeline Patti, who some years ago sang as an infant prodigy, made her second début as a prima donna. Verily it made us old opera habitués feel older than ever, and the sadness attending the thought of our own years naturally attuned our souls to a full enjoyment of the melancholy beauty of the *Lucia*. So far, I have heard no dissenting opinion touching the abilities of the young débutante. She is most pleasing in countenance, has enjoyed really judicious instruction, rejoices in a freshness of voice extraordinary, and knows no such word as *fiasco*. Let her be heard more!

APPENDIX C

DEBUT IN PHILADELPHIA

(Extract from a Philadelphia paper: February, 1860)

THE best school of music . . . lives still in the person of Miss Adelina Patti, the young artist who last evening enchanted a large audience at the Academy of Music by her exquisite performance of the heroine in "Lucia di Lammermoor." There were hundreds there with whom *Lucia* had long been worn threadbare, and a new sensation in connection with it was pronounced impossible. But even to the most blasé of opera-goers the evening was one of delighted surprise and greater enthusiasm has never been exhibited in the Academy on any occasion.

Miss Patti is very young in years and appearance, but she is a finished artist. She makes her début, indeed, at a point of perfection to which mature prima donnas never attain. . . . Her voice is a pure, delicious soprano, of great evenness and purity of tone, amply powerful in the upper and medium parts and promising greater strength in the lower. It is a fresh, unspoiled voice, with no tremble in it, and none of the cracks that exposure to the Verdi fire always makes in that delicate article, the female voice. It is as flexible as Sontag's,with a good natural shake, and a facility of execution that makes all appearance of physical effort in the most elaborate passages totally unnecessary. Nature has done everything for Miss Patti; but the very best teaching has given her that beautiful graceful delivery, noticeable particularly in recitative passages, but not the less to be admired in others. She has been singing ever since she could walk, having really "lisped in numbers." She has been heard here in concerts when only eight or ten years of age. But the usual fate of infant prodigies has not attended her; for her talent and her voice have grown with her growth, and, having ceased

to be an infant phenomenon, she is now that far rarer phenomenon, a beautiful singer of the purest and best school . . .

The triumph of the evening was in the Mad Scene, which was full of touching tenderness, united with *as beautiful singing as ever fell from mortal lips.* At its close the audience were entirely thrown off their usual reserve. Bouquets flew from every part of the house, the young artist was thrice called out, and at the last call there was an irrepressible shout of enthusiasm, the most honest and legitimate ever displayed in the Academy.

APPENDIX D

DEBUT AT COVENT GARDEN

(From the *Times,* Wednesday, May 15, 1861)

A NEW *Amina* does not usually excite much curiosity among frequenters of the opera. There have been since the days of Malibran so many *Aminas,* and nineteen out of twenty of them commonplace. Even the announcement of a new singer, irrespective of *Amina,* or *Lucia,* or *Arline,* or *Maritana,* or any other character, Italian or English (not excepting the *Traviata* herself)—so strong the reaction against preliminary flourish—is nowadays received with something like indifference. How many Pastas, how many Grisis, how many Jenny Linds ("nightingales," of course) have suddenly come forth and as suddenly vanished, or at best remained content to occupy a second-, third-, or fourth-rate position? The musical public has sunk into a sort of lethargic and cynical incredulity, the result of many sanguine hopes raised, and just as many woefully disappointed.

At present—we may venture to suggest—the most prudent way to obtain an impartial and indulgent hearing for a new aspirant to lyric honours is to say *nothing* in advance. Mr. Gye has adopted this course of action, or inaction, with regard to a very young lady who made her first appearance last night as the heroine of "La Sonnambula," and who, we may add at once, created such a sensation as has not been parallelled for years. It was simply advertised, last week, that Tuesday, May 14, Mlle. Adelina Patti would assume the part of Amina in Bellini's well known opera. Apart from those who had visited the United States of America, or those in the habit of perusing the musical notices of American journals, no one had ever heard of Mlle. Adelina Patti; and thus, although the house was brilliantly attended (it being a "subscription night"), there were no symptoms whatever of a more than ordinary degree of expectation. As that diverting necromancer, Gospadin Friskell, used to

declare, there was "no preparation"; certainly there was no "claque" —no disposition to anticipate favour or extort applause. The débutante was at first calmly, then more warmly, then enthusiastically —but always fairly and dispassionately—judged; and she who, to Europe at any rate, was yesterday without a name, before to-morrow will be a "town talk."

And now comes the difficult part of our task. Is Mlle. Adeline Patti—it would naturally be asked—a phenomenon? Decidedly *yes*. Is she a perfect artist? Decidedly *no*. How can a girl of scarcely eighteen summers have reached perfection in an art so difficult? It is simply impossible. We are almost inclined to say she is something better than perfect; for perfection at her age could be little else than mechanical, and might probably settle down at last into a cold abstraction or mere commonplace technical correctness. No; Mlle. Patti has the faults incidental to youth and experience; but these in no single instance wear the semblance of being ineradicable; on the contrary, they are in a great measure the consequence of an ardent ambition to attain at a jump what can only be attained with years of laborious application.

The management of the voice, the gradation of tone, the balance of cadence, the rounding off of phrase, are all occasionally more or less defective; but to compensate for these inevitable drawbacks there is an abiding charm in every vocal accent, an earnestness in every look, and an intelligence in every movement and gesture that undeniably proclaim an artist "native and to the manner born." And let it be understood that these qualities of charm, of earnestness, and of intelligence are not merely the prepossessing attributes of extreme youth, allied to personal comeliness, but the evident offspring of thought, of talent—we may almost add of genius, but assuredly of natural endowments, both mental and physical, far beyond the average.

Mlle. Patti's first appearance on the stage seemed to take the audience by surprise. So young an *Amina*—young enough in appearance to be the daughter of her *Elvino* (Signor Tiberini)—an *Amina*, in short, not yet done growing—had never before been witnessed. The recitative, "Care compagne," however, showed at once that in this particular case youthfulness and depth of feeling might be

found both naturally and gracefully united; while, long before the termination of the air "Come per me sereno," with its brilliant *cabaletta,* "Sovra il sen la man mi posa," a conviction was unanimously entertained by the audience that a singer of genuine feeling, rare gifts, and decided originality stood before them.

A high soprano voice, equal, fresh, and telling in every note of the medium, the upper E flat and even F at ready command; admirable accentuation of the words; considerable flexibility; dashing and effective use of "bravura"; expression warm, energetic, and varied, while never exaggerated and, last, not least, an intonation scarcely ever at fault—such were the valuable qualities that revealed themselves in turn during the execution of *Amina's* well known apostrophe to her companions on the auspicious day that is to unite her to *Elvino,* and which raised the house to positive enthusiasm.

A thing that must have astonished everyone was the thorough ease and aplomb (an excellent term) with which so young a stranger confronted so formidable an assembly in the midst of difficulties that at times are apt to unsettle the oldest and most practised stage singers. Too much self-composure, it might be urged, for one of Mlle. Patti's years, were it not that the ingenious confidence of youth, when uncheckered by the susceptibility of a nervous temperament, often makes it unapprehensive of danger and careless of results. At any rate, Mlle. Adelina Patti's first essay was a veritable triumph, and her ultimate success thus placed beyond a doubt.

When the applause at the end of " Come per me sereno" had subsided, there was a general buzz of satisfaction. The consciousness of a new sensation having been unexpectedly experienced seemed universal among the audience, who in grateful recognition might have addressed the new songstress in the language with which the village chorus apostrophise *Amina:*

> Vive felice! è questo
> Il commun voto, O Adelina!

The history of Mlle. Patti's first appearance is told in the foregoing. What followed was to match. Needless to describe the familiar incident of the bedroom, the arraignment and despair of *Amina;* still less requisite to descant upon the Mill Scene, with

the touching appeal of the innocent girl to the flowers that drop from her unconscious hands; or the awakening of the somnambulist to rapture, when her innocence is established and her lover once more at her feet. Enough that "Ah, non credea mirarti" was given with the truest expression, and "Ah, non giunge" with wonderful brilliancy, at the second verse rendered still more brilliant by a variety of new ornaments (the "staccato," as in the first cavatina, slightly over-obtruded), the high E flat and the F again successfully attacked, and the whole crowned with a neat, equal, and powerful shake upon the penultimate note—which, considering that the air was sung in the original key (B flat), was a feat of no small peril.

The descent of the curtain was the signal for loud and long-continued plaudits. For the third time Mlle. Patti was led forward by Signor Tiberini; and then, in obedience to a general summons, she came on alone, to receive fresh honours. To conclude—if Mlle. Patti will rightly estimate the enthusiasm caused by her first appearance before the most generous (although perhaps the most jaded) of operatic publics, and—not regarding herself as faultless—study her art with increased assiduity, a bright future is in store for her. If, on the other hand,—but we would rather not contemplate the opposite contingency.

(From the *Times*, second notice, May 23, 1861)

The second appearance of Mademoiselle Adelina Patti has confirmed her triumph. The house, last night, was crammed to suffocation, and the enthusiasm of the audience unbounded. So great was the excitement that we were reminded of the hottest days (or nights) of rivalry between our two Italian operas, with Jenny Lind at the Haymarket and Alboni at the Royal Italian Opera, each counting adherents by the thousands, and giving occasion for as much controversial warmth as if that memorable contest between the German Gluck and the Italian Piccini, which even the gravity of history is unable to ignore, had been revived with augmented vigour. Mlle. Patti and her manager, nevertheless, enjoy at the present moment an advantage of which neither Mlle. Lind and Mr. Lumley, nor Mlle. Alboni and Mr. Frederick Beale, could boast. There is no

opposition to contend with, and therefore nothing to divide the attention of the operatic world. The young prima donna is alone in her glory, and it depends on herself to walk over the course, not merely with ease, but with distinction. That, besides the strong attraction inseparable from youth and promise, Mlle. Patti possesses the secret of charming impartial hearers into zealous partisans, is pretty evident. Whatever she does is applauded—not with the conventional nonchalance of indifferent approval, but with applause dictated to the hands by the heart. Every point in her impersonation of *Amina* that "told" on the night of her first appearance was doubly appreciated now; and—not to enter into long detail, at the end of "Ah, non giunge" (which, by the way, she gave with an increased brilliancy, the result of increased confidence) the audience were fairly beside themselves. Of course, Mlle. Patti came forward with Signor Tiberini. Of course she appeared.

(From the *Musical World*, May 18, 1861)

"La Sonnambula," on Tuesday, was one of the most interesting performances we have witnessed at the Royal Italian Opera. The success of Mlle. Adelina Patti—now, indeed, the principal topic in London musical circles—took everybody by surprise, except those who had been present at the rehearsal and who were let into the secret. The reports of the American journals, although apparently overcharged and extravagant, must really be received as a closer approximation to the truth. The writers in the London papers on Wednesday, except in one or two instances, are as high-flown, uncompromising, and enthusiastic in the young artist's praise as their contemporaries of the New Orleans and Philadelphia press whose articles we have published.

Mlle. Patti is even now, at eighteen years of age, in many respects a great singer. Her voice is beautiful in quality—a real soprano equal in every part of the register, without the slightest tendency to tremulousness, and reaching to F in *alt* with astonishing ease. It is, moreover, extremely flexible, and is managed with more than ordinary skill. The young lady, indeed, is almost a thorough mistress of vocalisation, and has evidently devoted her whole soul to her profession. . . . We were surprised and delighted

beyond measure with her performance of *Amina,* which created the greatest sensation we have known at Covent Garden for years. Mlle. Patti's histrionic—if not so marked as her vocal—powers everywhere betray the true instinct of genius; and there are some parts of her acting in the "Somnambula" which could hardly be surpassed for truth, grace, and intensity of feeling.

(Editorial article, *Musical World,* May 18, 1861)

We had read about the lady in foreign journals, and had written about her no later than last week; but, although all we had read was highly eulogistic, and though we presented her in a most favourable light to the reader, . . . we were by no means sanguine as to the result. The general audience, of course, who knew nothing whatsoever about Miss Adelina Patti, was apathetic in the extreme, and there was not the least excitement manifested. The theatre, though subsequently full, at first, indeed, was badly attended, and little interest or curiosity was betokened for the débutante. A few, however, who learned what had taken place at rehearsal, were anxious and excited, and these were her solitary friends; and so Mlle. Adelina Patti made her first appearance in England with little or no hope or expectation from any feeling previously created in her favour.

Never did singer make her début in this country with so little known of her antecedents, and with so little stir made about her beforehand. . . . Her name had only appeared four days in advance of her début, and without a single remark in the advertisements. Not only was the young lady unheralded by puff of any kind, but the usual, indeed indispensable, statement as to who she was and where she came from, was omitted altogether. Did the director, assured of success, follow this unprecedented mode of securing a sensation? Or did he fear for the result, and so hold his peace? We think the latter most probable, as the temptation to disclosure involved in the complete conviction of having something great to exhibit would be almost too much for managerial forbearance. Mlle. Adelina Patti, we may therefore conclude, came out without any extraordinary hope on the part of the director—at all

events, until after the rehearsal, when announcement was too late—and with no expectation on the part of the public.

Never was surprise greater, nor result more triumphant. Mlle. Patti was welcomed with the warmth due to her extreme youth and prepossessing appearance; but there was no enthusiasm. The utmost attention was paid to the recitative preceding *Amina's* address to her companions, and the first hearing was satisfactory. The young artist for a moment or two betrayed nervousness; but she instantly shook off all fear, as if conscious of her strength, and executed a passage *di bravura* which completely electrified the house.

The audience was now indeed all ears, and Mlle. Patti's success may be chronicled as a perfect climax, rising from the first scene and attaining its culminating point in the famous rondo finale "Ah, non giunge." What our opinions of the débutante are will be found in our notice of the young lady's performance in its proper place. Meanwhile, we may assert emphatically that Italian opera has obtained an accession of strength in a certain line which we did not expect to witness in our time. Mlle. Adelina Patti is a triumphant refutation that art and genius have deserted the operatic stage. Having now obtained the legitimate successor of Bosio, Persiani,—we were about to add (and why not?) Jenny Lind,—why may we not look for another Pasta, Malibran, Catalani, Rubini, Tamburini, Lablache? Why should not the advent of Mlle. Patti fill us with hope for the fortunes of Italian opera? We may indulge imagination so far. At all events, we have experienced a new sensation, and that is something.

(Yet another account, which, however, did not appear until much later, is also worthy of reproduction here: the testimony of Dr. John Cox, an old and experienced habitué of the Opera.)

On Tuesday, May 14, a "trump card" was indeed played by Mr. F. Gye, he having been fortunate enough to secure to himself the services of Mlle. Adelina Patti, who took the town by storm; and no marvel, since no such début had been witnessed since that of Grisi on Easter Tuesday, 1834. As I had been fortunate enough to

witness the former event, so was I also privileged to be present at the latter, and in each instance the cases seemed to be very nearly identical. I had expected nothing from Grisi, and less perhaps—certainly not more—from Mlle. Adelina Patti.

That she came out with equal powers to those manifested by her great predecessor is not to be admitted. She had not the advantages of the same training, nor was her voice thoroughly formed; but the singular combination of youth and maturity in her appearance could not fail to strike every beholder; and this, being added to musical qualities already singularly high, won for her, on the instant, a rapturous welcome. Her voice—a high soprano, well in tune—reached E flat in *alt* easily, and was powerful enough for any theatre. It was then more flexible than fascinating. The latter quality was to come, as it has done most abundantly. Her shake was clear and brilliant; but she seemed to prefer staccato flights and ornaments, which were more extraordinary than agreeable or satisfactory to a well-trained ear.

As an actress, Mlle. A. Patti was composed rather than sympathetic, although as to the part in which she appeared—*Amina* in "La Sonnambula"—she had abundant opportunities of showing the latter quality. What she did, however, was elegant and unaffected, yet not always appropriate: for instance, throughout her first Sleep-Walking Scene she soliloquised in full voice till the moment when the weary girl lies down to repose, which was the best part of her performance. It was doubted at the time, by many of those best competent to judge, whether another first-class *artiste*, or one who might become so, had appeared; but time has proved that she was deserving of recognition in the former capacity, and that she has maintained and improved upon that position to the present hour.[1]

1 "Musical Recollections." London: Tinsley Bros., 1872.

APPENDIX E

FIRST APPEARANCE AS *LUCIA* AT COVENT GARDEN

(From the *Times,* May 27, 1861)

MLLE. ADELINA PATTI has lost none of her laurels by her impersonation of *Lucy of Lammermoor.* The opera, which is generally looked upon as the masterpiece of Donizetti, was given on Saturday night before the largest audience probably ever assembled within the walls of the new theatre. "All the world"—or, in stricter language, all the musical world—were there, and the young singer had to brave an ordeal before which the most experienced artist might reasonably have quailed. . . . This time there was no question about "youth and inexperience"; the enormous audience had come with the expectation of being entertained *quand même,* and with the settled belief that they were going to witness a performance of the highest stamp. . . .

The *Lucia* of Mlle. Patti may be described, *mutato nomine,* in pretty nearly the same terms as her *Amina.* It combines the same engaging beauties with the same inevitable defects, the defects—as in the first instance—being precisely those which years of practice must be devoted to surmount, while the beauties are such as could only proceed from rare natural endowments united to an early quickness of apprehension almost unprecedented. There is another recommendation, moreover, calculated to elicit for Mlle. Patti the especial sympathy of those who admire the genuine school of Italian opera. Her style is Italian, her pronunciation of the words is Italian, her delivery of the voice is Italian, her method of execution is Italian, and, in short, her whole performance, from the first to last, is Italian—of the purest. . . . The first act of Mlle. Patti's *Lucia* is the least striking; though, in her opening scene with *Alisa,* she restores the original *cavatina* in place of the so frequently interpolated "Perchè non ho," and then in a truly artistic spirit sacri-

fices a means of *ad captandum* effect out of deference to the original intention of the composer.

Her duet with the *Edgardo* (Signor Tiberini), if a little deficient in warmth of expression, offers more than one beautiful point, and with respect to mere execution is irreproachable. That with *Enrico* (Signor Graziani) at the commencement of Act II affords another proof of Mlle. Patti's good taste, and, it may be added, of her uncommon vocal proficiency. She not only gives the first movement in the proper key, but sings the florid passages exactly as they were written—which very few representatives of *Lucia* have done since the opera was first brought out. Here, it is true, as in the love scene with *Edgardo,* she might abandon herself more freely to the dramatic situation and exhibit still more poignant signs of distress at the exclamation "Ahi . . . il folgore piombò," when the forged letter has persuaded her of her lover's inconstancy; but the sequel would atone for much graver shortcomings.

The scene of the signing of the contract and the unexpected arrival of *Edgardo* are done to perfection. Mental anguish and utter prostration of spirit could hardly be portrayed with intenser earnestness. That Mlle. Patti possesses the dramatic instinct as well as extraordinary musical talent this one situation is quite enough to prove. We have seen it represented with a more liberal administration of the shows and gestures of emotion, but never with more touching and unaffected sentiment.

The crowning triumph of the young singer—the *Lucy* of eighteen summers—is obtained in the famous Mad Scene—one of those strokes of genius with which the too careless Donizetti has on more than one occasion redeemed a comparatively feeble opera. Here, as in the final act of the "Sonnambula," Mlle. Patti puts forth all her energy, and succeeds in riveting attention from the first note to the last, the audience being gradually wound up to a pitch of enthusiasm. One of the greatest attractions of the powerfully worked-up scene, in the hands of Mlle. Patti—who imitates no preceding mode (being too young, indeed, to have profited by any)—is its entire and abiding freshness. The conception is as original as the execution is brilliant, and the one as strikingly picturesque as the other is surprising.

In the *fioriture* with which, like all her predecessors, Mlle. Patti embellishes the already sufficiently elaborate text, the same peculiarities are observable as in her version of "Ah, non giunge," and the slow movement that precedes it; and these are dealt out even in greater profusion, if not absolutely with greater effect. The impression produced—whatever nice objections might be taken here and there—fairly disarms criticism.

The audience on Saturday night, as though delighted at being allowed in the end to give expression to their pent-up feelings, broke forth into vehement applause, alike from boxes, stalls, and galleries—applause as genuine and unanimous as we can remember, and prolonged until the new favourite had come forth from behind the scenes, an eye-witness to the sensation she had created. Even this was not enough, for no sooner had *Edgardo* given up the ghost than the call for Signor Tiberini, promptly responded to, was followed by another for Mlle. Patti, kept up with such pertinacity that the young lady was ultimately induced to make her appearance with her toilette only half achieved. That Mlle. Patti has already won the sympathy of the English public is unquestionable; to make her conquest good depends on herself.

(From the *Athenæum*, June 1, 1861)

Presently it may come to be proved whether the new singer is available in the better and more unhackneyed repertory of music by Mozart, Rossini, and Meyerbeer. Meanwhile Mlle. Patti is more intensely the fashion than any singer who has till now sung at Covent Garden. . . . "Lucia" did not alter our impressions of Mlle. Patti's qualifications. The fatigue of her voice was more evident than in "Sonnambula." Its tones were frequently not agreeable—now and then out of tune. She appeared generally disposed to get through the sustained passages of the part for the sake of arriving at her favourite staccato effects, with which the music was garnished. In her concerted music want of body of voice was to be felt; but she phrased it well; a broad *cadenza* in the recitative preceding the *largo* of the mad song was by much her most satisfactory and artistic display of the whole evening. . . .

The *cabaletta*, to which Mme. Persiani used to give such poignancy

of accent, was ineffective because hurried. Respecting Mlle. Patti's careful training there cannot be two opinions. . . . Her acting bore out her singing, as before. Not a trace of nervousness was in it; not a touch of inspiration to distinguish her from every *Lucia* who has gone before her. It was pleasing, though conventional; least conventional in the contract scene. There her helpless, girlish distress after the "malediction" and her appeal to everyone in turn for pity and rescue, were pretty and pathetic. She was tumultuously applauded, though less so than in her former part. Whether the rapture will last or not depends on herself.

APPENDIX F

FIRST APPEARANCE OF *VIOLETTA* AT COVENT GARDEN

(From the *Times,* July 5, 1861)

LAST night Mlle. Adelina Patti appeared in "La Traviata," which, much and not unreasonably as it has been stigmatised by moralists—as much and perhaps less fairly by musicians; often, too, as it has been laid aside for "used up"—seems to imbibe new life whenever there is a new singer to represent the heroine.

Mlle. Piccolomini wore it out; but then Mme. Bosio revived it. Mlle. Piccolomini again did it to death; but again it was revived by Mme. Penco. No one, indeed, had made the opera "pay" except Mlle. Piccolomini, and with the loss of Mlle. Piccolomini it was believed (hoped?) that the London public would also have to put up with the loss of Violetta—both retiring on their laurels. Not so, however. The success achieved by Mlle. Patti with those heroines of impeachable character, *Amina* and *Lucy of Lammermoor,* was so brilliant that not to have allowed her, in turn, to revive the *Traviata* would have been outraging a precedent. . . .

Our readers need be under no apprehension; we are not going to describe the *Traviata;* . . . our opinion of the opera has been stated more than once; and if another Jenny Lind were to come forward and enchant our ears with the sentimental strains of "Ah! fors' è lui che l'anima," and the gay divisions of its *cabaletta;* if another Rachel were to eke out the horrors of the Bedroom Scene, with twice the agonies of the poisoned *Adrienne,* we should feel in no way disposed to change or modify it. Nevertheless, a word or two may be legitimately bestowed on Mlle. Patti, who, though neither a Lind nor a Rachel, is something so genuine, piquant, original, and attractive that, if the promise of her extreme youth is not

subsequently belied by her mature achievement, she will have no reason to regret being anything more or less than herself.

Mlle. Patti's *Violetta,* as an artistic display, is more elaborately finished than any previous impersonation of the character we remember. As a piece of acting—if we accept her endeavour to soften down, nay, altogether to obliterate whatever under any circumstances is likely to offend the taste or shock the scruples of the most reserved spectator as legitimate—it must be pronounced consummate. Mlle. Patti represents *Violetta* as one who, under other conditions, might have adorned a very different sphere from that in which she is unhappily destined to move. . . . Her gaiety in the earlier scenes is continually under check. Now and then a gesture, a movement, a mere look, shows plainly that, while striving to brave it out, she is ashamed of and really detests her position; and that even the idea of disinterested love for *Alfredo,* ultimately leading to redemption, breaks upon her, from time to time, as an illusion to the emptiness of which she becomes thoroughly alive.

In the first act, the interest would be voted rather slow. In the second act, however, the interest still rises with the situation, as conceived and represented by the actress. Into the details of the lingering death we shall not enter, but we may single out . . . the duet with *Alfredo* in the third act, "Parigi o cara," as a genuine triumph of expression which, had Mlle. Patti done nothing else remarkable, would have fixed her performance in the memory of the audience. The voice — to use a not infelicitous conventional term —is sympathetic; "the manner is sympathetic"; and if the method is faulty, that is more than condoned by the extreme youth of the executant . . .

APPENDIX G

THE NEW *ZERLINA* AT GRISI'S FAREWELL

(From the *Times,* July 8, 1861)

THE occasion was rendered further interesting by a new *Zerlina,* and such a *Zerlina* as, all things considered, the stage has not witnessed for many years. So far, indeed, as the impersonation goes, we are inclined to think that only those who are old enough to have seen Malibran in the part can remember anything to match it. We may as well premise the music has been rendered with greater finish by experienced singers,—Persiani, Alboni and Bosio, for instance,—but never with more eminently musical expression. The audience was taken at once by the youthful appearance of Mlle. Patti, and by the vivacity of her "Giovinette che fate." . . . With "La ci darem" they were thoroughly charmed. The hesitation in the solo of *Zerlina,* "Vorrei, e non vorrei"; the archness she threw into the line "Ma può burlarmi ancor"; and the passing thought, while still her mind is not entirely made up, bestowed on poor Masetto, "Mi fa pietà," were one and all perfect. The encore that followed was unanimous.

Still more striking, however, was "Batti, batti"—a little drama in itself. Besides being exquisitely sung, the by-play by which Mlle. Patti accompanied this was inimitable. When she sang "Batti, batti, o bel Masetto," it was with an evident conviction that were Masetto a thousand times as jealous, he would not (could not) do it on any account. . . . Receding a few steps away from Masetto as if better to satisfy herself of her victory, and then, seeing the complete metamorphosis her endearments have achieved, running back to embrace him like a wayward child—with the words "Pace, pace, o vita mia," the whole picture is filled up, the sentiment of the duet expressed to the life, and just as complete a conquest made of the audience as of *Masetto.*

In the Ball Scene the astonishment of the peasant girl at the grandeur that surrounds her, the restraint with which she listens to the insinuating advances of *Don Giovanni,* her awkwardness in the dance, and many other happy and delicate touches show that—like her incomparable *Masetto,* Signor Ronconi—she never for an instant loses sight of the character she is sustaining. The "Vedrai carino" was less spontaneous, less finished, too, in its vocal phrasing, and somewhat damaged at the end by a trivial ornament which altered the text of Mozart while very far from improving it. . . . But, every shortcoming allowed for, Mlle. Patti's *Zerlina* was a genuine artistic triumph, and made an unmistakable impression on the most crowded house of the season.

(From the *Musical World,* July 13, 1861)

The performance of "Don Giovanni" derived a special interest from the appearance of Mlle. Adelina Patti in the character of *Zerlina*—the happiest of her efforts and the greatest of her triumphs. Mlle. Patti is gifted by nature with the requisites for succeeding in this captivating part. In her pretty peasant attire she was all a painter could imagine as a Spanish country girl; her grace and simplicity, and the very sound of her fresh, youthful voice, completing the illusion. Her acting too was perfect. She was neither, as most of our *Zerlinas* are, the fine lady masquerading in homely garb, nor the vulgar hoyden, according to Piccolomini's notion of the character, but the rustic a little idealized, such as we could fancy, though we have never seen in actual life. Everything she did was so entirely the result of impulse, so artless and unpremeditated, the minutest details were so consistent and characteristic, as to leave the audience convinced that nothing less than an actress of nature's own making was before them. . . .

Hitherto she has shone chiefly—though by no means exclusively—in pieces demanding great compass of voice, brilliant execution, and variety of florid embellishment. The music of *Zerlina* neither requires nor admits of such means of effect. Yet to sing it according to the design of the composer is the severest trial to which the vocal artist can be exposed. And through this trial our young prima donna passed triumphantly. . . . Mlle. Patti showed her skill in the

art of delivering the light, rapid *parlante* recitative of the Italian comic stage—an art in danger of being lost, now that this kind of musical dialogue is going out of use. . . . *Zerlina's* lively prattle was clear and intelligible as if she was simply talking without musical notes at all. We do know what has been Mlle. Patti's musical education, but in this and every other respect it has evidently been excellent.

(From letters from "An American in London" addressed to *Dwight's Boston Journal of Music,* August 3, 1861)

But the chief delight and admiration of the audience was "little Patti" as the clever little witch and coquette of a peasant bride, *Zerlina.* And justly so. It was the most charming of all her charming impersonations; decidedly the most fascinating *Zerlina,* musically and dramatically, I have seen since Bosio. It would be folly to expect in her the perfect singer we have lost in Bosio; yet she sang all the music simply, with pure style and expression, and with most felicitous and characteristic touches. The voice, which we had feared was growing old too fast from too much work in public, and too little time for rest and private study, had a delicate, fresh bloom upon it that was delightful. It was only once, I think, that she indulged in an unmeaning cadenza or "embellishment" on Mozart's perfect melody; and that probably was the fault of some adviser. She seldom deviates from good taste and artistic truth where she is allowed to go alone; her instinct seems unerring. In recitative, in the easy, conversational Italian *parlando,* she is singularly fine for such a child.

Her acting of the part was full of life and nature, amusingly original, the by-play incessant, and helping out the significance of every scene in which she was on the stage. For instance, the wonder and delight with which she (and her *Masetto* with her) gazes round on the splendors of *Don Juan's* ball-room, and the timidity with which she sinks into the luxury of one of those incredible chairs! Best of all, her exquisite coquetry in "Batti, batti," with her offended simpleton of a bridegroom. Happy for her hero to be so exquisitely mated! Happy for the public, too.

APPENDIX H

FIRST APPEARANCE AS *ROSINA* AT COVENT GARDEN

(Letter from "An American in London" addressed to *Dwight's Boston Journal of Music*, October, 1861)

THE *Rosina* was Adelina Patti, whose acting of the part was girl-like, graceful, pretty—a *Rosina* in the bud, as it were—bright, natural and well conceived, but not fully charged with all the *espiègleries* which a riper actress finds play for in the character. Musically she achieved a new success in it, although liable to some deductions. Her voice requires transposition of much of the music which is suited to a low mezzo-soprano. But the more serious fault was that she took great liberties with the text, embellishing what is originally as full of embellishment as it well can be. Even if the most finished artists, like Sontag, Alboni, Bosio, may be allowed to riot sometimes in a music so suggestive of the mood, it was hardly good taste for so young a singer to begin with variations on Rossini. Herein Patti had been unwisely advised; left to her own instincts, she seems seldom to err against good taste and fitness. This part, of course, afforded fine play for those bright points of vocalization, those staccato sparkles in the upper octave, etc., which she commands in such perfection and with which the mass of an audience is sure to be delighted.

Yet, on the whole, with all its errors and shortcomings, how many more fascinating *Rosinas* can we find? Measured by the maturest standard, it lacked much; for such a girl it was wonderful. In some quarters she has been visited by a too severe and sweeping criticism; it can do her no harm if it saves her from her own commonplaces—that is to say, from too frequent trying over of her old and easy triumphs, and provokes her to be earnestly true to herself, still studying what intrinsically is fit in every case, and still a learner.

Nothing is more fatal to the real progress of an artist than to keep pressing certain springs (be they ever so ingenious and peculiarly her own) which she has found are sure to "bring the house down." But Patti has it in her to be much more than a mere effect singer, a mere vocal virtuoso. She already sings with character and feeling; she will do more and more so if she is not injured by success.

APPENDIX H (*a*)

THE ORNAMENTATION OF ROSSINI

(From the *Musical World,* May 17, 1863)

THE prominent features of the cast [of "Il Barbiere"] were the *Almaviva* and *Rosina* of Signor Mario and Mlle. Adelina Patti —the most experienced tenor and the most unpractised soprano; the oldest and youngest, indeed, in their respective departments, on the Italian boards. They were thoroughly well matched. If, while rivalling her accomplished partner in the grace, brilliancy, and life-like naturalness of her acting,—for we can remember no more finished delineation of the sprightly ward than hers,—Mlle. Patti would also strive to follow his example in adhering a little more closely to the musical text, her *Rosina* would be absolute perfection. But it is vain to hope for this. Mlle. Patti may cite the most illustrious of her predecessors, from Malibran and Persiani to the much regretted Angelina Bosio, as warrants for the liberties in which she herself indulges. "Una voce poco fa" and "Dunque io son" seem destined to be perpetually used as themes for the exhibition of the singer's skill in the art of embroidery.

True, the part of Rosina was originally intended for a contralto, and this in a great measure exonerates sopranos like Bosio and Mlle. Patti, who can hardly be expected to sacrifice their chance of applause in favour of what would at the best be a correct and ineffective reading. The secret, nevertheless, is how to reconcile these elaborately contrived *fioriture,* which are the rhetoric of florid song, with the real character of the music thus embellished—the flowing melody of Rossini with all its glittering display of ornament. Once hit upon that secret and objection would be done.

APPENDIX I

CHARLES DICKENS ON ADELINA PATTI

(From *All the Year Round,* December, 1861)

AND now has come the youngest *Amina* of all, and at once, without a single note of prelude or preliminary trumpet, has stirred up the tired town to an enthusiasm recalling the days when Malibran tottered across the stage in haste and frantic grief, and when Lind breathed out her whole soul of sadness over the flowers as, leaf by leaf, they mournfully dropped on the stage. Born in Madrid, Italian by parentage, trained exclusively in America, Mlle. Adelina Patti, on her first evening's appearance at our Italian Opera—nay, in her first song—possessed herself of her audience with a sudden victory which has scarcely a parallel. Old and young are now treating as conspiracy and treason any looking back to past *Aminas* —any comparison. This new singer, in her early girlhood, is (for them) already a perfect artist—one who is to set Europe on fire during the many years to which it may be hoped her career will extend.

Nor is their delight altogether baseless. Mlle. Patti's voice has been carefully and completely trained. Those who fail to find it as fresh in tone as a voice aged nineteen should be, must be struck by its compass, by the certainty of its delivery, by some quality in it (not to be reasoned out or defined) which has more of the artist than the automaton. She has a rare amount of brilliancy and flexibility. She has some "notions" (as the Americans have it) of ornament and fancy which are her own, if they be not unimpeachable, say the dry-as-dusts, in point of taste.

If not beautiful, she is pleasing to see; if not a Pasta, a Malibran, or a Lind in action, she is possessed with her story. . . .

For the moment the newest *Amina* has the ear of London. In the future Mlle. Patti may become worthy of having her name written

in the golden book of great singers. Meanwhile, what a tale is here told, not merely of her great and welcome promise, not merely of her possessing that talent for success—charm—which is born into few persons and which cannot be bought or taught, but of the lasting truth and attraction of the music to which Bellini set the story of the innocent girl who walked across the mill-wheel in her sleep!

APPENDIX J

FIRST VISIT TO DUBLIN

(From the *Irish Times,* December, 1861)

THE series of operas which Mlle. Patti inaugurated came to a close with "Martha" on Saturday evening. From the beginning the young prima donna has had a succession of triumphs. Nothing could be more brilliant than the talents she displayed, and the exhibition of the rich gifts bestowed on her by nature at so early a period. No great lyric artist, to our knowledge, has manifested so large a share of histrionic and vocal ability in mere girlhood. Only eighteen years old, yet singing with the highest culture, the most dazzling brilliancy and finish in every character, and acting with the tact and experience of one who had trod the boards for years; and possessing the fresh charm of girlhood, the grace of beauty, and the buoyancy of youth. Anyone so fitted to enrapture the young, please the mature, and gratify the experienced in art, we have never witnessed on the stage.

She sings the music of Rossini, Mozart, Verdi, Donizetti, and Flötow with equal truthfulness, and frequently adorns their writings with *fioriture* appropriate and dazzling, executed with an ease which astonishes. If she has a fault in her vocalism, it is redundancy of ornament, and too frequent a recurrence of birdlike *staccati* passages.

The part of *Lady Henrietta,* in "Martha," is particularly suited to Mlle. Patti. Her acting is tempered by good taste, and the tact she displays in the by-play is worthy of all observation. Then her singing is distinguished by a truthful adherence to the text, enriched by ornamentation in keeping with the various themes, and softened by an expression pure and natural. To speak of some of her flights of song is now superfluous, as all who have heard them must have

been equally delighted and amazed. This latter unique portion of vocal art she exhibited in "The Spinning Wheel" quartet. In the Italian version of the "Last Rose of Summer" she evinced a purity of style never excelled by any of her predecessors, while she put them all in the shade by her rendering, to an encore, of Moore's words to the same melody. She then gave "Home, sweet home," and to another re-demand, "'Twas within a mile of Edinboro' town." The Scotch tune she sings with unspeakable archness, and originality of tone and manner which cannot fail to charm.

At the termination she was greeted with acclamations, and left the stage laden with bouquets. As she emerged from the stage-door to her carriage, she was met by a cavalcade of the students of Trinity College,—almost all honour men,—who took the horses from the vehicle and drew her to the hotel, amidst deafening cheers. And thus ended the climax to one of the most triumphant successes within our memories.

APPENDIX K

FIRST VISIT TO BRUSSELS

(From a Brussels paper, February, 1862. Translated from the French)

IN the two performances of "La Sonnambula" Mlle. Adelina Patti surpassed all the expectations which, with good reason, had been founded on her extraordinary merit and recent reputation. Mlle. Patti is a great singer. She belongs to no one school more than another; her singing, full of sympathy and feeling, leaves the old beaten paths far behind. Her style is peculiar to herself; it is impossible to compare it, with justice, to anything ever heard before; she resembles no one, she imitates no one; she is Mlle. Patti! Her certainty of execution, the delicacy and purity apparent in all she does, and, above all, the irreproachable correctness of the whole register of her voice, which is of incredible compass, render her an exception among the artistic celebrities of the day.

Her prodigious talent astonishes, surprises, captivates; you applaud in spite of yourself, carried away by an irresistible feeling of admiration. If to the preceding qualities, which border on the marvellous, we add the most graceful appearance that ever set off a young girl; beautiful and brilliant black eyes, full of slyness when they are not full of tenderness or grief; and infantine grace, overflowing with charm and well-bred ease, and a genuine histrionic talent, delicate, witty, striking, and dramatic, you will have a tolerably complete idea of this fairy of eighteen whose name is Adelina Patti. Her success, or, as we prefer saying, in order to be nearer the truth, her triumph, was immense.

APPENDIX L

RENTREE AT COVENT GARDEN, SECOND SEASON

(From the *Musical World*, May 10, 1862)

NO long-established favourite of the public was ever re-welcomed with greater enthusiasm than Mlle. Adelina Patti on Monday evening, when she made her first appearance for the present season in the opera of the "Sonnambula." It was in the character of *Amina* that her earliest laurels were won, and few can have forgotten the extraordinary sensation produced on the occasion of her début. Unheralded by preliminary flourish, she took the audience by storm; and a name that was previously unknown to this country became in a very brief period familiar as a household word.

The brilliant reception of Monday night gives fair reason to believe that the interest in Mlle. Patti will be maintained this season at its height. What was written on the occasion of her first performances might be repeated almost word for word, and apply just as well. We can detect, indeed, but little difference. Her voice seems to have gained in power, and her singing in spontaneity. But the peculiarities of her vocalisation—its technical defects no less than its indefinable charm, its occasional derelictions from severe purity of style no less than its warmth of expression and engaging tenderness, those beauties and those faults, in short, which make up a sum total as irresistibly captivating as it is unhackneyed—remain much as they were before.

As an actress, Mlle. Patti has made a decided advance. We can recall nothing more graceful, nothing more impassioned, than the scene of the bedchamber, where the distracted *Amina* strives in vain to persuade *Elvino* of her innocence. Nor do we remember to have seen an audience more thoroughly moved to sympathy. The fall of the curtain was a complete triumph for Mlle. Patti, who was recalled before the lamps, to be literally overwhelmed with applause.

APPENDIX M

FIRST APPEARANCE AS *DINORAH*

(From the *Musical World*, August 9, 1862)

THE *Dinorah* of Mlle. Patti is from first to last an entirely new creation, and, moreover, in the fullest degree as captivating as new. It is not merely in all respects, whether regarded in a dramatic or in a vocal sense, the best *Dinorah* we remember, but, viewed as a whole, the only *Dinorah* entirely realising the poetical conception which laid so strong a hold upon the imagination of Meyerbeer as to inspire "Le Pardon de Ploërmel," if not as the most brilliant certainly as the most ethereal of his masterpieces. Originality has been universally recognised as an attribute of each successive assumption of Mlle. Patti. Whatever may be her shortcomings, she invariably thinks for herself, invariably presents the character she is assuming under a fresh and unhackneyed aspect—the mark of her own piquant individuality being everywhere apparent. This, combined with youth, a prepossessing appearance, and a natural grace that enables her to tread the stage as though she had been "born to it," confers upon her and all her endeavours a certain indefinable charm.

The attraction thus created, and which gives to her *Zerlina*, her *Rosina*, and one or two other impersonations, the peculiarities so agreeably distinguishing them, is, perhaps, nowhere more vivid—perhaps nowhere so vivid—as in her *Dinorah*, the most elaborately studied, the most carefully wrought out, and, at the same time, so successfully are the mechanical means kept out of sight, the most apparently spontaneous of her performances.

APPENDIX N

FIRST VISIT TO VIENNA

(Letter from Dr. Julius Wagner, of Vienna, to the *Musical World*, dated March 17, 1863)

THE great reputation which little Adelina Patti has achieved in two quarters of the globe is not unmerited. Such was the general opinion after Vienna had heard her. Now, people in Vienna are not prejudiced in anyone's favour; they must be convinced, delighted, charmed, before going into such raptures as they indulged in with Adelina Patti. Adelina Patti, however, has in her service a herald who awakens a favourable feeling toward her; this is her beauty. Yet no; beauty is not the proper expression. Mlle. Patti is, above all, an original and peculiar being; she is to so great a degree herself alone, and possesses so little in common with any member of the grand army of fair mediocre singers—of the so-called celebrated *cantatrice* and travelling virtuosas—that she cannot be described in general terms. Mlle. Patti appeared, and a storm of applause burst forth; applause in which so many, who were thoroughly roused by the exterior of the little, dainty, graceful girl, took part.

It is the charm of the girl, nay, of the child, which produces so refreshing an effect when she appears. It is spring; morning; dew; the first ray of the sun; the perfume of the rose that has blown during the night; which causes the faces of all the audience to brighten up. The head of a child upon the symmetrically formed and charming body of a young girl, such is Adelina Patti. A delicately chiselled head, with fine mobile features, and the guileless eyes of a doe—white marble turned into flesh, surrounded by a dark frame of hair, and daintily intersected by black brows, eyes, and lashes: such is Adelina Patti. A mignon head upon a delicate but beautifully robust and healthy body. A head of fourteen upon a

bust of eighteen. Small, dainty, and delicate is the sphere over which the individuality of Adelina Patti exerts its sway. Her movements, her smile, her joy, her seriousness, her grief, her suffering, are all set in a small ring, but so naturally, so harmoniously, so completely, so *onefully*, as to produce a pure, full impression.

There is nothing striking and grand; no lightning, no thunderclaps, no demoniacal passion, and no ecstatic cry of joy, belonging to Adelina Patti; it is a maiden in her spring; spring in art, which we see in Adelina Patti: it is, moreover, the spring of the South, which bids even the violets burst forth in their maturity. The form of Mlle. Patti bears the colour and features of the southern or Oriental spring. The way she treads the uncertain boards of the theatre produces the impression of a somnambulist boldly advancing, secure and steady, toward her goal, without a consciousness of the dangers that menace her. She has not merely the charm, but also the courage and pleasing audacity, of a child.

Thus does she comport herself; thus does she act; thus does she sing. Fresh as is her demeanour, her voice is equally so. The latter sounds like a bell, just bright out of the mould. The hearer cannot determine the question—is her voice great? is it powerful? it is so entrancingly fresh. The hearer cannot ask himself, is Mlle. Patti a great singer? for she overcomes the greatest difficulties with child-like facility. The hearer cannot ask himself, is Mlle. Patti well trained? for he believes that what she can do now she could always do.

She sings with taste and grace; she allows the pearls of her voice to flow on their course; she wails like a nightingale; she warbles like a lark; she twitters the highest and sharpest tones, swelling upwards from the fundamental notes of the lower register like—but similes must here cease; what she effects can be effected only by a bird turned into a human being. Indeed, Mlle. Patti produces the impression of having a bird nestling in her breast. She sings like a bird and like nothing else; pleasing repose in her body, tune and warbling in her throat. We have heard singers possessed of more boldness and virtuosity than Mlle. Patti, but this singing child is a charming individuality, with which no other is to be compared. This is her value; this is her especial charm.

APPENDIX O

ADELINA PATTI AS *DINORAH*

(From "Die Moderne Oper," by Eduard Hanslick. Translated from the German.)

I CANNOT conclude these observations upon Meyerbeer's *Dinorah* without calling to mind the extraordinary performance of Adelina Patti in the title-rôle—one of the most remarkable leaves in the Sibylline book of the variations between creative and executive musical art. In point of fact, I thank Patti for a most peculiar and vivid impression of an opera which until then was unsympathetic to me. Neither the marvellous technique nor the wealth of elegant *spirituel* detail in this score of Meyerbeer's reconciles one to the morbidly refined music nor to the nonsensical, uninteresting action. Even to-day I cannot depart from this view, for naturally the charm of a genial interpretation goes as little to the composer's credit as the blame for an unintellectual one.

Call it Meyerbeer's misfortune or his fault, as you will, that he needed an exceptional personality for the success of *Dinorah*—it remains none the less a combination of luck and merit brought about through the personality of Adelina Patti. One could swear that the part, note for note, was written for her. . . . In its poetic aspect, even, *Dinorah* bespeaks Patti's individuality. There is something poetical in the figure of the young shepherdess, an elemental charm, which comes to light when a kindred nature awakens it. Such elemental charm stirs in the bright, fresh voice of Patti, in her manner of singing and acting, in her whole demeanour. She instinctively reveals whatever natural poetry or genuine feeling may slumber in *Dinorah,* and thus renders sympathetic a character which others, by their coquettish and *blasé* conception generally make just the opposite. Even more than as poet has the composer here worked beforehand for Patti. As though he had in mind during the whole time

the loveliest tones, the peculiar *timbres* and modulations that this singer possesses—thus and not otherwise did he compose his "Dinorah."

On her first entry Patti's movements are all replete with unaffected grace and naturalness. She depicts *Dinorah's* madness with a touch of dreamy distraction which bursts as readily into merriment as into sadness. For bizarre or profound ideas, for carefully studied *nuances,* one must seek as little in this as in any other of her rôles. She achieves the right thing, not through reflection, but through her wonderful instinct. What could be smoother, more delightful, than her sweetness and the impeccable intonation of her expressive swelling tones in, for instance, the "Slumber Song"?

That it should be so hard to describe music, so impossible to portray absolute beauty of sound! Only he who has no notion of the power and nobility of this sensuous beauty in music can ask how one can contrive to listen with pleasure to insignificant and undramatic rôles when Patti sings them! Note the difference between a commonplace phrase played by an ordinary fiddler and rendered by a Joachim or a Wilhelmj upon his Stradivarius. Yet an exceptionally beautiful voice is much lovelier, much more individual, than the costliest Stradivarius; it exists only once in the world.

When she goes into *Corentino's* hut, Patti concludes her imitation of the clarinet figure with a *cadenza* (written for her by Meyerbeer) that rises to the E in *alt* and thence seems to descend in a thousand glittering sparks. In the succeeding duet Patti executes her brilliant *bravura* passages with the highest art and the most astounding virtuosity. Decidedly they do not sound in the least like a concert piece, but rather the natural improvised accompaniment to the jokes which *Dinorah,* with much dancing and teasing, plays upon the poor bagpiper. The first act ends with the delicious "Bell Trio"; and he alone knows it properly who has heard Patti sing it.

The "Shadow Song" of the second act is the show-piece of every famous *coloratur* soprano, but I do not believe that, quite apart from Patti's graceful acting and natural sweetness of expression, there is another who can sing the first two bars as she does; nothing slurred or blurred, but, together with the most beautiful *legato,*

every semiquaver ("eighth note") as though chiselled out of marble. . . . Then the legend of the buried treasure, with its three notes, E, F, G, in the major key—only three notes, but the loveliest that haunt our memory, for here Patti's vocal art works with the magic of a natural spell. Again, the closing trio, which she elevates both musically and dramatically to the highest plane. And, finally, the duet with *Hoel* in the last act, wherein she depicts with such exquisite feeling *Dinorah's* return to consciousness and memory, and, after the actual climax of her rôle, can still adorn so wonderfully. . . .

Beyond doubt, nature only when in rarest holiday mood brings forth such a musical phenomenon as this little Italian girl. Adelina Patti must be designated the greatest of living singers; it would almost appear as though she will remain the last great singer who, after being reared in the severe school of Rossinian virtuosity and Bellinian *belcanto,* and there equipped for the highest achievements of Italian vocal art, *yet ultimately turned to the performance of modern dramatic tasks.*

APPENDIX P

FIRST APPEARANCE AS *LEONORA*

(From the *Morning Post,* May 29, 1863)

MLLE. ADELINA PATTI has fairly astonished even the most devout believers in her genius by a really magnificent performance of *Leonora* in "Il Trovatore." We could not have supposed that the charming, piquant little representative of the simple peasant girl *Amina,* the lively, tormenting bride of *Don Pasquale,* the sly and humorous ward of *Don Bartolo,* or the naïve *Zerlina* could have shone so brilliantly as she did last night in high lyric tragedy. But who can measure the capacity of youthful genius? Who can reason with mathematical exactness from what is to what may be when a new spiritual manifestation, glowing and fresh in the springtide of feeling, appears before us? What will come next, and next? as the poetical Mr. Cobden would say. A new chord is struck, a thousand hitherto unawakened emotions are set in sympathetic vibration, and all that is left for the reasoning observer is the statement that he is astonished. Prosaic admission! But so it must be until critics become prophets.

That Mlle. Patti would sing the *cavatina,* "Tacea la notte" with wondrous brilliancy and effect was, of course, generally expected. We, among others, felt quite sure that this piece of florid executancy would be a triumph in its way; but it was in the subsequent portions of the opera, where grand tragic power and intensity of feeling are required, that Mlle. Patti completely surprised us. Her scenes with *Count di Luna* and *Manrico,* for instance, in the last act were given with the inspiration and abandon of true genius. The little girl "broke out like a fire," kindling sympathetic warmth in the very hearts of the audience. To say that she was well supported by Signor Mario would be a very cold and inadequate expression of the deep impression which that transcendent artist has left upon our mind by his performance of *Manrico* last night.

APPENDIX Q

CARLOTTA PATTI

(From the *Musical World,* April 18, 1863)

CARLOTTA PATTI came into the world under an Italian sky, that sky whose influence seems so potent to implant at once the deepest passion for art and to mould the faculties expressly for its highest achievements. In 1840 her mother, Mme. Patti, was fulfilling an engagement as prima donna at the Pergola Theatre in Florence, and in that year, and in this selfsame city, gave birth to the infant whose career now occupies our attention. . . . The musical aptitude which so remarkably characterised the members of the Patti family early manifested itself in Carlotta; but her inclination was in the first instance toward instrumental music rather than vocal, and, studying under the direction and tuition of the celebrated Henri Herz, she attained a high degree of proficiency as a pianiste.

So thoroughly was art the very animating breath of this child of Italy that, simultaneously with her rapid progress in musical studies, she evinced a marked faculty for the sister art of painting, which she cultivated with signal success. When her sister Clotilda (who had married Signor Scola), having fallen into ill health, was ordered to sojourn in South America, Carlotta left New York with her, to tend and watch over her during her illness. Not all the assiduous care of a devoted and affectionate sister could preserve Mme. Scola from her doom. She lingered a few years, and died, nursed and solaced to the last by the tender attention of the faithful Carlotta. When the last scene was over, the gentle-hearted sister returned with saddened spirit to New York, where she found her youngest sister Adelina just commencing the vocal studies of which we have witnessed the brilliant fruits. To these she associated herself with ardour and energy, and with such fiery mettle did she enter

upon the course that her curriculum was swept through in the brief space of one year, at the end of which she was pronounced one of the most accomplished vocalists in America.

Mlle. Carlotta Patti's first appearance as a public singer was in New York, in January, 1861. Her success was complete and decisive, and the ever-watchful and sagacious *entrepreneur* of transatlantic renown, Mr. Ulmann, at once engaged the triumphant young débutante for the grand concerts at the Academy of Music in that city. From that time her reputation became established, and has maintained itself with regular and steady accession to its rank and degree till it has reached its present commanding eminence. One after the other, the principal cities of the United States hailed the advent of the newly found treasure with eager expectation, mingled, of course, with the usual amount of scepticism when a new reputation has to be tested, and one by one each ratified the verdict of New York, and crowned the brow of the young artist with fresh laurels.

Upon the outbreak of the struggle between the Northern and Southern States, Mlle. Carlotta Patti was driven, as it were, into a new field of victory, into which, but for the fortune of war, she might never have ventured, and the records of operatic art would have lost one of its brightest names. The opera house is about the exact opposite of a Temple of Janus, and when war is raging its doors have an almost irresistible tendency to remain closed instead of open. Such, in truth, was the experience of the manager of the New York opera, to whom the war proposed this puzzling alternative: either find a singer who shall eclipse all that we have any memory of, or give up the game as lost—in the American vernacular, "cave in."

With singular shrewdness the management bethought itself of the only solution to the difficulty, which was to prevail on Mlle. Carlotta Patti, by a strong appeal to her compassion, to cast away her long-cherished reluctance to appear upon the stage.[1] With equal cour-

[1] On account of her lameness, which, as will be seen, this writer attributes in the first instance to an accident, not to a congenital cause. The article is quoted here, however, as a curious and characteristic example of American "press-agent" work in the sixties. No one on the staff of the old *Musical World* could possibly have written it.—H. K.

age and kindness of heart, which do her infinite credit, Mlle. Carlotta Patti yielded to their pressing solicitations and consented to sacrifice her own feelings—feelings springing from a source of such delicate sensibility as must have cost no small effort to counteract—for the benefit of her early patrons. . . . The cause of this unwillingness to appear on the stage must be stated ere the struggle to overcome it can be fully appreciated. When a child Carlotta met with an accident by which the muscles of one ankle were so much injured as never to have completely recovered their perfect action, and the effects of this accident are still to a certain extent noticeable in her gait. . . .

The engagement of Mlle. C. Patti, during which she appeared in the same round of characters as those in which her sister Adelina had won distinction (in "Lucia," "La Sonnambula," "Puritani," and "Martha"), once more attracted the public to the Academy of Music, and the fortunes of that establishment were restored to a flourishing condition. It need hardly be said that whatever trace the physical defect to which we have alluded may have left, it was only in the susceptible imagination of the artist that they could operate as a drawback to her appearance on the stage; for her presence is, on the contrary, remarkably elegant and pleasing, and even had the case been otherwise, her brilliant vocalisation would have covered every disadvantage with a mantle of dazzling glory.

APPENDIX R

THE PATTI FAMILY

(Extract from a letter written by Louis Moreau Gottschalk, June 15, 1863, to *L'Art Musical*)

I PLAYED this evening before a tolerably numerous audience, who listened to me with marked kindness and a degree of attention which I do not always meet from the audiences of small towns. My piece, "L'Union," was greatly applauded, being written for the present state of affairs.

Madame Strakosch also (sister of Adelina Patti and wife of Maurice Strakosch) was greatly applauded. She possesses a very agreeable contralto, a sympathetic appearance, and a popular name, three conditions of success, enhanced in her case by the most distinguished manners and by a course of life in private against which calumny has never been able to say a word.

This Patti family is truly a dynasty of distinguished singers. The father, Salvatore Patti, was still, some twenty years ago, an excellent tenor *di forza.* His wife (the mother of Adelina) was a fiery lyrical tragic actress, whose name of Barili (for her first husband was Signor Barili) is still celebrated in Portugal, in Spain, and at Naples, where she achieved some great triumphs. . . . Her eldest daughter, Clotilde Barili (who died four or five years ago), was eminently successful at New York, and in all Spanish America, especially at Lima and San Francisco. Her sons, Ettore Barili, a distinguished baritone; Antonio, *basso profondo;* and Nicolo Barili, *basse chantante,* bravely support the family name.

The children of the second (Patti) marriage are: Amalia Patti, married to Maurice Strakosch, a distinguished pianist, whose compositions deserve to be better known; Carlotta, whose extraordinary voice and marvellous flexibility have fanaticised the United States,

and been a second edition of the enthusiasm excited there by Adelina. After Carlotta come Carlo and Adelina. As for the latter, all Europe already knows her. With regard to Carlo, he is a handsome fellow, with something of the Bohemian about him, whom a spirit of adventure took to California and Mexico (where he played the violin with remarkable ability); to New York, where he sang, married, and got divorced (he was seventeen years of age); to Memphis, where, after being the hero of certain love affairs, he married again, it is said, enlisted in the Southern army, got appointed conductor of one of the bands, was killed and resuscitated in several official bulletins, and is at present enjoying the health the Pattis usually enjoy, for, among other enviable privileges, they have the privilege of never being ill. What a family! Do you know many others in art whose quarterings of nobility are better than those I have just enumerated?

L. M. Gottschalk.

APPENDIX S

ADELINA PATTI'S FIRST APPEARANCE AS *MARGUERITE*

(From the *Daily Telegraph,* June 8, 1864)

MLLE. PATTI appeared last night for the first time in England in M. Gounod's "Faust," and achieved a most extraordinary success. She not only surpassed every other representative of the character, but, what is still more wonderful, she surpassed herself. Never, probably, has so marvellous a display of genius been witnessed on the lyric stage as the performance of this gifted lady in the celebrated Garden Scene. Her singing, from the first note to the last, left absolutely nothing to be wished for, while her acting was so crowded with inspiration that it seems as impossible a task to describe it in cold and insufficient words as it would be to fix the changing colors of a rainbow. Now, at all events, any such attempt would be hopeless. . . .

Certain that Mlle. Patti would sing the music of M. Gounod as she sings that of every other composer, with irreproachable skill, refinement, and expression, we yet felt some doubt if she could so subdue her Southern vivacity as to qualify her for the due presentment of the tender, dreaming girl whom Goethe's genius has established as the ideal type of Northern sentiment. That doubt she last night soon dispelled. The vision with which the arch-fiend tempts *Faust* to sell his soul showed the young Italian lady transformed into a veritable *Gretchen.* The normal expression of Mlle. Patti's features was modified by flaxen hair, the brilliant blackness of her eyes was subdued by blond brows. Her first spoken words betokened as complete transformation of feeling. Nothing could be more artistic and natural than the demeanour of the new *Margherita* when first accosted by *Faust;* after one rapid glance she

turns aside, and, with exquisite simplicity, lets fall the melodious phrase wedded forever by Gounod to the oft-quoted lines:

Bin weder Fräulein weder schön

as she resumes her homeward way.

But the test of a *Margherita's* capabilities is, of course, in the third act, and in this Mlle. Patti is beyond rivalry. That the Jewel Song was perfectly executed, the concluding shake brilliantly articulated, and the air encored, it is almost needless to say; but we may observe that the increase of power in Mlle. Patti's lower tones enables her to give unusual effect to the conclusion of the duet—that the short episode descriptive of the death of *Gretchen's* little sister was rendered with heartfelt pathos—and, in fine, that every phrase of the loveliest love-music ever penned received from the young lady's exquisite taste and deep feeling new significance and fresh beauty.

But, apart from all purely musical considerations, the mere acting of Mlle. Patti in this scene would suffice to rivet the attention even of one who was deaf to the "concord of sweet sounds." . . . She seemed as though possessed by some irresistible spell, against which it was vain to struggle, and thus an atmosphere of innocence pervaded the passionate rapture of the scene and seemed almost to justify the final apotheosis of *Gretchen's* repentant spirit. We must take some speedy opportunity of noticing in detail this remarkable impersonation. For the present it must suffice to say that Mlle. Patti's *Margherita* is the crowning glory of her brilliant career.

APPENDIX T

PATTI AND MAPLESON

(From the "Mapleson Memoirs,"[1] Vol. II., pp. 23–25)

ON the second night of our engagement we performed "La Traviata." That afternoon, about two o'clock, Patti's agent called upon me to receive the $5,000 for her services that evening. I was at low water just then, and inquiring at the booking-office, found that I was £200 [$1,000] short. All I could offer Signor Franchi was the trifle of £800 [$4,000] as a payment on account.

The agent declined the money and formally announced to me that my contract with Mme. Patti was at an end. I accepted the inevitable, consoling myself with the reflection that, besides other good artists in my company, I had now £800 to go on with.

Two hours afterwards Signor Franchi reappeared.

"I cannot understand," he said, "how it is you get on so well with prime donne, and especially with Mme. Patti. You are a marvellous man, and a fortunate one too, I may add. Mme. Patti does not wish to break her engagement with you, as she certainly would have done with anyone else under the circumstances. Give me the £800 and she will make every preparation for going on the stage. She empowers me to tell you that she will be at the theatre in good time for the beginning of the opera, and she will be ready dressed in the costume of *Violetta,* with the exception only of the shoes. You can let her have the balance when the doors open and the money comes in from the outside public; and directly she receives it she will put her shoes on and at the proper moment make her appearance on the stage." I thereupon handed him the £800

[1] London: Remington and Co., 1888. This excerpt is included in the Appendix as a curiosity. The "shoe story," as told in *Mapleson's Memoirs,* is more grossly exaggerated than it used to be when he told it himself; and he always forgot to point out the real cause of the incident, namely, his own unwillingness to abide by his contract and pay Mme. Patti her fees in advance.

I had already in hand as the result of subscriptions in advance. "I congratulate you on your good luck," said Signor Franchi, as he departed with the money in his pocket.

After the opening of the doors I had another visit from Signor Franchi. By this time an extra sum of £160 had come in. I handed it to my benevolent friend, and begged him to carry it without delay to the obliging prima donna, who, having received £960, might, I thought, be induced to complete her toilette pending the arrival of the £40 balance. Nor was I altogether wrong in my hopeful anticipations. With a beaming face Signor Franchi came back and communicated to me the joyful intelligence that Mme. Patti had got one shoe on. "Send her the £40," he added, "and she will put on the other."

Ultimately the other shoe was got on, but not, of course, until the last £40 had been paid. Then Mme. Patti, her face radiant with benignant smiles, went on the stage, and the opera, already begun, was continued brilliantly until the end. . . .

Soon afterwards the most money-making of prime donne was, without being aware of it at the time, seized for debt. It happened in this manner. From Boston we had travelled to Montreal, where, by the way, through the mistake of an agent, gallery seats were charged at the rate of five dollars instead of one. On reaching the Montreal railway station, we were met by a demand on the part of the railway company for three hundred dollars. The train had been already paid for, but this was a special charge for sending the Patti travelling car along the line. I, of course, resisted the claim, and the more energetically inasmuch as I had not three hundred dollars in hand. I could only get the money by going up to the theatre and taking it from the receipts.

Meanwhile the sheriffs were upon me, and the Patti travelling car, with Adelina asleep inside, was attached, seized, and ultimately shunted into a stable, of which the iron gates were firmly closed.

There was no room for argument or delay. All I had to do was to get the money, and, hurrying to the theatre, I at once procured it. Unconscious of her imprisoned condition, Mme. Patti was still asleep when I took the necessary steps for rescuing from bondage the car which held her.

APPENDIX U

ADELINA PATTI AND HER ART

(An Appreciation. By H. E. Krehbiel, from "Chapters of Opera," pp. 125–127)

A VAST amount of reminiscences would have been justified by such a celebration,[1] for it would have thrown a bright sidelight on the marvellous career of Mme. Patti, a career without parallel in the history of the last half-century. Within three years after she made her first essay, "our little Patti," as she was then fondly spoken of, had achieved the queenship of the lyric stage; and now, twenty-two years later, her title had not suffered the slightest impairment. Within the time singers who had won the world's admiration had been born, educated, and lifted to the niches prepared for them by popular appreciation, but all far below the place where Patti sat enthroned. Stars of great brilliancy had flashed across the firmament and gone out in darkness, but the refulgence of Patti's art remained undimmed, having only grown mellower and deeper and richer with time. Truth is, Mme. Patti was then, and is still, twenty-five years later, a musical miracle; and the fact that she was in New York to sing in the very spot in which she began her career twenty-five years before should have been celebrated as one of the proudest incidents in the city's musical annals.

For the generation of opera-goers who grew up in the period which ought to be referred to for all time in the annals of music as the Reign of Patti, she set a standard by which all aspirants for public favour were judged except those whose activities were in a widely divergent field. Not only did she show them what the old

[1] The twenty-fifth anniversary of Mme. Patti's début in opera in New York.

art of singing was, but she demonstrated the possibility of its revival. And she did this while admiring enthusiastically the best results of the dramatic spirit which pervades musical composition to-day. Her talent was so many-sided and so astonishing, no matter from which side it was viewed, that rhapsody seems to be the only language left one who attempts analysis or description of it.

Her voice, of unequalled beauty, was no more a gift of nature than the ability to assimilate without effort the things which cost ordinary mortals years of labour and vexation of soul. It was perpetually amazing how her singing made the best efforts of the best of her contemporaries pale, especially those who depended on vocal agility for their triumphs. Each performance of hers made it plainer than it had been before that her genius penetrated the mere outward glitter of the music and looked upon the ornament as so much means to the attainment of an end; that end, a beautiful interpretation of the composer's thought.

No artist of her time was so perfect an exponent as she of the quality of repose. So far as appearances went, it was as easy for her to burden the air with trills and *roulades* as it was to talk. She sang as the lark sings; the outpouring of an ecstasy of tones of almost infinite number and beauty seemed in her to be a natural means of expression. Her ideas of art were the highest, and it was a singular testimony of her earnestness that, while educated in the old Italian school of vocalisation, and holding her most exalted supremacy as a singer of Rossini's music, her warmest love, by her own confession, was given, not to its glittering confections, but to the serious efforts of the most dramatic writers. This must be remembered in the list of her astonishing merits now, when her voice can no longer call up more than "the tender grace of a day that is dead." Mine was the proud privilege and great happiness of having heard her often in her prime.

APPENDIX V

PATTI AS *CARMEN*

(From the *Times*, July 16, 1885)

MME. PATTI has evidently studied her character in all its bearings and has formed a distinct idea of it which, although we believe it to be erroneous, is at least consistent. *Carmen* as here presented appears to us to be little more than a heartless flirt, delighted to inspire feelings in others which she does not mean to reciprocate, or could not if she would. The real *Carmen* of Prosper Mérimée's novel, as well as of Bizet's score, we take to be an embodiment of what Goethe calls the "dæmonic" in nature—a girl rather placid and enigmatic than lively or demonstrative (as Mme. Patti was) in her ordinary demeanour, but carried away by irresistible force when once her passion takes a tangible form. When she loves the soldier, nothing will serve her but to ruin him for the sake of her caprice. He has to forsake his dying mother and incur the punishment of a deserter because so it pleases her. When she leaves the dragoon for the superior charms of the bull-fighter, she is equally willing to sacrifice her own life to her passion. Fate, through means of a pack of cards, gives the superstitious girl a warning; she fully credits the omen, but she defies it.

Of all this there was little in Mme. Patti's acting, or at least we could not discover it. Her by-play was a great deal too elaborate, too lively, without showing much reference to the essential features of the character. She did some extremely pretty and graceful things —for instance, a regular little *pas de deux,* danced in conjunction with Mme. Cavalazzi. But all this any Spanish or gipsy girl might have done. Unfortunately, she did not reserve her force for the

[1] This article was written by Dr. Franz Hueffer, then newly appointed musical critic of the *Times* in succession to James H. Davison, who died in March, 1885.

salient points belonging to *Carmen* as a distinct individuality: when the aforesaid "dæmonic" influences came into play, her resources were exhausted. Thus her wooing of *José*—for the advances all come from her side—was wanting in tenderness. She seemed to be amused rather than fascinated by her weak-minded lover.

Again, her bursts of anger lacked the dignity of intense passion. There was nothing of the volcanic fierceness of Southern nature. Her disappointment was that of a spoilt child. From this general charge of weakness the death scene must be pronounced exempt. Here Mme. Patti rose to the height of the situation, indicating with psychological truth and great force of dramatic execution the physical dread which overcomes *Carmen's* defiance to fate when she sees the raised knife of the infuriated José. It might be well said, "Nothing in her life became her like the leaving of it." On the other hand, the fortune-telling scene, one of the most powerful situations in the opera, fell completely flat.

For this the artist was not altogether responsible. The music of this scene lies in the middle register of the voice, in which Mme. Patti can produce little effect. And here we touch upon one of the chief difficulties of her task. The part is written for a mezzo-soprano; it is too low for her. She has to transpose the airs and introduce occasional changes in the text, going up to a higher octave where the lower is intended. Moreover, the brilliancy of Mme. Patti's vocalisation finds no scope in this music. Bizet employs the voice as a means of dramatic expression; the meaningless fireworks of the Italian school he despises. Notwithstanding all this, Mme. Patti's vocal rendering was one of high excellence and well worthy of her reputation. Her first song, with its delicate dramatic passages, was a work of perfect vocalisation and intelligent phrasing, and the national air with which Carmen lures the poor soldier to ruin was given with irresistible charm. Taken all in all, her effort deserves all the praise which is due to conscientious study and serious endeavour.

APPENDIX W

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AT COVENT GARDEN: CELEBRATION: JULY 25, 1885

(From the "Mapleson Memoirs," Vol. II., pp. 156–160)

I ENDED my season about the third week of July, when Mme. Patti appeared as *Leonora* in "Il Trovatore," renewing the success which always attends her in that familiar impersonation.

On this night, the final one of the season, Mme. Patti concluded her twenty-fifth consecutive annual engagement at Covent Garden. Numbers of her admirers formed themselves into a committee for the purpose of celebrating the event by presenting her with a suitable memorial. At the termination of the opera the curtain rose, and disclosed Mme. Adelina Patti ready to sing the national anthem, supported by the band of the Grenadier Guards, in addition to the band and orchestra of the Royal Italian Opera. This was the moment chosen for the presentation of a superb diamond bracelet, subscribed for by admirers of the heroine of the occasion. Its presentation was preceded by my delivery of the following address from the Committee of the Patti Testimonial Fund:

"Madame Adelina Patti: You complete this evening your twenty-fifth annual engagement at the theatre which had the honour of introducing you, when you were still a child, to the public of England, and indirectly, therefore, to that of Europe and the whole civilised world. There has been no example in the history of the lyric drama of such long-continued, never interrupted, always triumphant success on the boards of the same theatre; and a number of your most earnest admirers have decided not to let the occasion pass without offering you their heartfelt congratulations.

"Many of them have watched with the deepest interest an artistic career which, beginning in the spring of 1861, became year after

year more brilliant, until during the season which terminates to-night the last possible point of perfection seems to have been reached. You have been connected with the Royal Italian Opera uninterruptedly throughout your long and brilliant career. During the winter months you have visited and have been received with enthusiasm at Paris, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna, Madrid, and all the principal cities of Italy and the United States. But you have allowed nothing to prevent you from returning every summer to the scene of your earliest triumphs; and now that you have completed your twenty-fifth season in London, your friends feel that the interesting occasion must not be suffered to pass without due commemoration. We beg you, therefore, to accept from us, in the spirit in which it is offered, the token of esteem and admiration which we have now the honour of presenting to you."

The National Anthem, which followed, was received with loyal cheers, and the season terminated brilliantly. After the performance an extraordinary scene took place outside the theatre. A band and a number of torch-bearers had assembled at the northern entrance in Hart Street, awaiting Mme. Patti's departure. When she stepped into her carriage it was headed by the bearers of the lighted torches; and as the carriage left, the band struck up. An enormous crowd very soon gathered, and it gradually increased in numbers as the procession moved on. The carriage was surrounded by police, and the procession, headed by the band, consisted of about a dozen carriages and cabs, the rear being brought up by a vehicle on which several men were standing and holding limelights, which threw their coloured glare upon the growing crowd and made the whole as visible as in the daytime. The procession, which left Hart Street just before midnight, reached the Midland Hotel in about half an hour, almost the whole distance having been traversed at a walking pace. When Mme. Patti reached the hotel she was serenaded by the band for a time, and more fireworks were let off. The great crowd which had assembled remained in Euston Road outside the gates, which were closed immediately after the carriages had passed through.

APPENDIX X

SECRET OF THE LONGEVITY OF PATTI'S VOICE

(From "Success in Music," by Henry T. Finck, pp. 65–66) [1]

THUS, for nearly a decade more than half a century, has Adelina Patti been able to arouse the enthusiasm of the public and the cities. What is the secret of this longevity of her voice?

It lies in this, that she never abused it and always took good care of her health, resisting the temptations to self-indulgence which her great wealth abundantly afforded her. She carefully avoided overexertion and excess of any kind. In her own words, "Never in my whole career have I sung oftener than three times a week, and to this precaution I attribute my many years of success." . . .

Throughout her career Patti kept up her exercises, but of course they were easy compared to those which less fortunately endowed artists have to submit to. "Her vocal organs," wrote Hanslick in 1879, "which she has managed with such consummate skill since her childhood, and with the instinctive certainty with which the rest of us perform an ordinary action, hardly need any more practice. Patti exercises solfeggios daily for half an hour, mostly *mezza voce;* the rôles themselves she does not go over. Never does she practise facial expression or gestures before a mirror, because, as she thinks, that only yields grimaces (*singeries*)."

The same Viennese critic, who knew her well and had many talks with her, speaks of some of the remarkable things she was able to do. Her memory was amazing. She learned a new rôle thoroughly by softly singing it two or three times, and what she had once learned and sung in public she never forgot; so that it was not necessary for her to take the scores in her trunk when she was on tour. Equally remarkable was her sense of pitch. Hanslick was present once when she sang the Jewel aria from "Faust," which

[1] London: John Murray, 1910.

was followed by noisy demonstrations of enthusiasm lasting many minutes. Suddenly Patti, without signalling the orchestra, took up the trill on B, the orchestra joined her in the next bar, and there was not the least difference in the pitch.

Hanslick's assertion that she always sang with pure intonation is not strictly true, for I have heard her sing off the pitch more than once; but that simply showed she is human. The dozens of performances by her I heard in the Academy of Music, New York, convinced me that she was above most singers of her class—a model, especially to her Italian countrywomen—in so far as she avoided all clap-trap display not prescribed in her part, such as abnormally sustained high tones, interminable trills, arbitrary tempo, and explosive final notes.

Her evident relish of her own work and of stage life in general has been one of the secrets of her success. To be sure, she enjoyed the great advantage of being entirely free from nervousness. Even when, as a child of seven, she first appeared as a concert singer, or at sixteen on the operatic stage, she was, by her own testimony, absolutely ignorant of what stage-fright means.

Such are the good points of Patti and the advantages she enjoyed. Unlike Jenny Lind, moreover, she had great personal beauty, and beauty is a joy forever, on the stage as well as off.

APPENDIX Y

PATTI AND HER WELSH CHARITY CONCERTS

(From the *Cambrian*, Swansea, August 15, 1884)

TIME was when Patti was only a name in the provinces, and especially in the Principality of Wales. True, that name was a great one—the greatest name among living exponents of song, but still a name, a reputation only, not an experience, not a person. It was said that gifts so great and genius so distinguished as those of Adelina Patti were not for the enjoyment of provincials, but were reserved for the metropolitan cities of the world, where alone she could meet with a fit auditory and a fair reward. At any rate, it was confidently averred that the great prima donna had never sung in a provincial city, however great, and that she would not condescend to do so.

When the Queen of Song, however, bought for herself a home nest among the Welsh mountains, and when at length she came to take up her brief holiday residence at Craig-y-Nos Castle, there was a whisper of hope that her voice might be heard in the land of her adoption—the home of minstrelsy, for, as the old motto says, "Môr o gân yw Cymry gyd." With fear and trembling lest they should be asking too much, the late Silas Evans and his then co-adjutors in the Swansea Choral Society wrote to ask whether there was the slightest chance of the diva paying Swansea a visit of song; but the answer, as might have been expected, was not a reassuring one. Engagements were many, days of rest few, and then—aye, and then, could Swansea afford to pay the price, even the most moderate price, which Mme. Patti's services for one concert were valued at in the musical world? No! No! And so the matter ended.

The newspapers contained glowing accounts of the alterations at Craig-y-Nos Castle, the furniture, the gardens, the conservatories,

etc., and now and again there was a whisper of "grand doings at the castle"; and ever and anon a tourist in that wild valley would relate how he had wandered about the enchanted abode and heard by stealth the Nightingale sing "Home, sweet home" so that it went to his heart; but still Mme. Patti was but a name. Later on it was whispered that the romantic châtelaine paid *incognita* visits to Swansea. The knowing ones said they had seen her in the street, leaning on the arm of Signor Nicolini; and that she was, as she was reported to be, beautiful to look upon, "comely to a wish." Then the people heard of joyous proceedings in the Swansea Valley. Mme. Patti was welcomed to her mountain home with an address, with fireworks, and with song. But all this was far away from the great bulk of the people, to whom Mme. Patti was still a name, a winsome mystery, a fascinating romance, spoken of as a being apart, and almost unapproachable; the admired of millions, the friend of genius, the associate of emperors and kings and princes.

But at length that spell was broken in local life, and the name was exchanged for the personality, the reputation for the experience. Mme. Patti came down from her pedestal to befriend the poor and destitute, and, in descending from the standpoint of fame to mix with the people amongst whom she dwelt, she ascended another throne—the throne of the affections of a grateful people, whose plaudits and memory, whose esteem and love, she will ever inherit.

Hearing that the Swansea General Hospital was in debt, she most magnanimously came forward to its help, and gave a concert which realised no less than £830 10s. Her reception was a royal one in the best sense. The hearts of all the populace went out to meet her, as their voices were raised to acclaim her Queen of Song and Princess of Beneficence. To alter the words of the all-vanquishing Cæsar: She came, she *sang,* she conquered!

APPENDIX Z

PATTI'S THEATRE AT CRAIG-Y-NOS CASTLE

(From the *Sunday Times*, August 15, 1891)

HERE in her lovely Welsh home Mme. Patti has just brought to fruition one of the most charming ideas that ever occurred to a great artist. In the old days, when art flourished chiefly by aid of private means, it was not a rare thing for sovereigns, princes, archbishops, and nobles to build themselves a theatre in their palaces. But until the present moment no such luxury had ever, so far as I am aware, formed an adjunct to the residence of a singer—even of a queen among singers. The reasons which have actuated Mme. Patti in the execution of this purpose are simple enough. She loves her home and she loves her art. The more she enjoys the former the less she can practise the latter. If she remains six or eight months out of the twelve at Craig-y-Nos, amid delightful scenery and the most perfect comfort that modern science can devise or money purchase, she must perforce be absent during that time from the stage which it is to her a happiness to tread. Hence the idea—unite the two pleasures and make them one by erecting a theatre within the very walls of Craig-y-Nos Castle!

The genie of the story, who raised a palace in the desert, was not more powerful than is our diva of the lyric stage. He was a little quicker in carrying out his operations, that was all. Two years ago Mme. Patti said, "I will have my theatre," and within twelve months it was built. The work of decorating and fitting up the interior has only, however, been finished lately; for, although on a small scale, it is very elaborately constructed, and neither in the auditorium nor on the stage has aught been omitted that could please the eye or tend to secure mechanical completeness. In plan, indeed, it is a Bayreuth Theatre *en miniature:* no side boxes or seats, a

single gallery at the back, stalls sloping down to an orchestra lowered so that the musicians are almost out of sight, and a clever system of stage lighting by electricity. The pure Renaissance of the architecture is set off to advantage by a singularly delicate scheme of color—pale blue, cream, and gold—to which the deep sapphire of the plush curtains supplies a most effective contrast. The walls and proscenium are handsomely decorated, and between graceful columns are inscribed in panels the names of all the great composers. The scenery is painted by some of our best theatrical artists, while the act-drop, representing *Semiramide* driving her war chariot, drawn by two fiery steeds, is a very daring and spirited achievement, the value of which is enhanced by the admirable likeness that the queen of the picture bears to the Queen of Song.

Altogether, then, the little theatre at Craig-y-Nos is quite a gem of its kind; and let me add that, to be in keeping with everything else here, it could not very well have been less. Ever since they took up their residence in this out-of-the-way paradise, M. and Mme. Nicolini have been augmenting its beauties and increasing its stock of treasures. The theatre is only part of a new wing which, besides adding immensely to the imposing exterior proportions of the castle, yields an amount of space within which the hospitable tendencies of the host and hostess rendered absolutely essential. In one of the noble suite of apartments thus created is placed the famous orchestrion of Backer and Kroll, of Geneva and Freibourg, which is the largest in the world and probably the only one worked by electricity. It is a magnificent instrument, and remarkable as much for its mellowness of tone as for the accuracy with which it reproduces the most subtle orchestral effects. Wagner it brings in a truly wonderful way, the "Tannhäuser" overture and the Trauermarsch from "Siegfried" being by no means beyond the capacity of this extraordinary piece of mechanism. Nor does anyone listen to these things with greater delight than Mme. Patti herself, for she adores Wagner's music and only wishes she could sing it without the danger of a strain that might be harmful to her voice.

APPENDIX AA

PATTI'S RETURN TO COVENT GARDEN (1895)

(From the *Sunday Times*, June 16, 1895)

IT was a great night. I have assisted at a good many Covent Garden functions in my time—State nights, the Patti nights of old, first nights, farewell nights, and nearly all the rest of the special nights that there have been there since the seventies began; but never yet have I witnessed within those classic walls an event so profoundly interesting, so absolutely unique in its nature, as the return of Mme. Patti in Verdi's "Traviata" on Tuesday last. It was not so much the outward aspect of the scene that was remarkable, though that was sufficiently brilliant to call forth the descriptive powers of a Sala or a Bennett. It was rather the fact that London was welcoming back to her proper sphere a singer who had held undisputed sway among the giants of her art for a period of thirty-four years, and who, after an absence of a decade, was capable of resuming her place upon the Covent Garden boards, peerless and unapproachable as on the day she last appeared there.

Such a thing, it is needless to say, is utterly without precedent in the history of the operatic stage. Famous singers have come and gone, and come back again, before now, but hardly a case can be cited in which it would not have been better for their reputation had the return "after many days" been avoided. Concerning Mme. Patti, it assuredly never will be said that she profits by a bygone renown. It was choice, not necessity, that induced her to return to a stage to which she had not yet bidden adieu, and the reason why she did not shirk the ordeal was because she knew her powers to be still undimmed in lustre, and therefore still worthy of her name. She is too sensible—nay, too sensitive—to run any risks in this matter.

Nevertheless, the representative audience of Tuesday contained

enough of the new generation (which "knew not Patti") for it to be discriminating, and even critical. There was no indulging in wild enthusiasm as an affair of duty. I fancied I recognised the accents of the *vieille garde* as it uttered its shout of welcome when the marvellous little lady—the most fascinating *Violetta* that ever trod the boards—tripped forward with all the youthful grace and lightness of yore, resplendent with jewels, and attired to perfection in the loveliest of pink satin gowns. How could she be other than nervous at such a moment? It was wonderful how she controlled her emotion and sang her "Ah, fors' è lui," with such steadiness and *verve,* and with the ever-incomparable beauty of tone and charm of style. But the reserve and self-control exercised throughout that first act only afforded one more proof of greatness in the great artist. The old admirers might still be to the fore with the plaudits and the recalls; there was plenty of time to complete the victory of the new legion.

In the second act Mme. Patti, quite herself once more, acted as I have never before seen her act. Such spontaneity, such impulse, such intense feeling, she had never thrown either into the scene with the father or the farewell to *Alfredo.* The superb tones, too, rang true, and touched the heart as no others can. When the curtain fell this time there was a distinct crescendo; but the climax of the night's demonstrations only came at the end of the third act, after the most powerful and graphic realisation of the ball-room episode that the unhappy *Violetta* has as yet figured in. Then it was that the whole house rose at the diva, called her forward again and again, and, from the front row of the stalls to the hindmost ranks in the gallery and slips, substantially acknowledged that there was only one Patti in the world. That splendid ovation was probably the grandest triumph that she has ever won in the whole course of her career.

APPENDIX BB

HONOURS TO MADAME PATTI AT BRECON

(Joseph Bennett in the *Daily Telegraph,* May 25, 1897)

THE Queen of Song, as she is called here with convincing iteration, paid her first visit to Brecon in 1889, when the National Eisteddfod held its meeting under the shadow of what remains of the old castle. That was a memorable event in Eisteddfodic annals, since it marked a record attendance, no fewer than 12,814 persons passing the turnstile during the Patti day. On that occasion the great artist sang three songs to the enthusiastic crowd, who worshipped her with true Welsh fervour. Mabon was the Eisteddfod conductor, and led the chorus in "Land of my Fathers."

Said the Lady of Craig-y-Nos, "You have a splendid voice, sir"; and the hon. member, not to be outdone, answered, "So have you, madame."

In view of still another celebration, the "Conscript Fathers" of Brecon took a step without precedent in the annals of the town. They have never scattered honours lavishly. I am assured, indeed, that the freedom of the borough has been granted to outsiders only five times. It was this rare dignity that the Mayor and Corporation offered to Mme. Patti-Nicolini, and that the Queen of Song today came hither to receive, with all due pomp and ceremony. When Brecon had made its offer to the Lady of the Castle, and she had graciously accepted, the authorities here very properly resolved not to do things by halves. The burgess-elect they determined should be received with almost royal honours, met at the railway station by the dignitaries of the borough and county, and escorted to the Eisteddfod hall in solemn procession. . . .

So did official Brecon proceed to meet its guest, presently returning through the sunlit streets with Mme. Patti occupying the

place of honour in the Mayor's carriage. The ceremony at the station was brief and simple. On the party from Craig-y-Nos alighting, the "Queen" was conducted by the Mayor to his carriage, the Mayoress having first presented her with a superb bouquet. Mme. Patti's companions, among whom were the Baroness von Zedlitz and Mr. Augustus Spalding, were next escorted to the carriages in waiting, and when all was ready the procession set out, passing under triumphal arches and through lanes of admiring and applauding people.

An incident on the way should be mentioned. Brecon, like London, once possessed a gateway, which has disappeared; but the site is known, and there the townsfolk built a castellated arch, that the town's guest might enter with the more ceremony. On the Mayor's carriage arriving at this structure, which was supposed to be closed, the Deputy-Mayor (Mr. Lewis Williams) uplifted his voice and said: "Admit Mme. Patti-Nicolini into the confines of the borough of Brecon." There was none to say him "nay," and the procession passed triumphantly on to the hall with blare of bugle and beat of drum. As Mme. Patti entered, leaning on the arm of the Mayor, enthusiastic cheers were raised, and continued till she had taken her place in a large chair of carved oak, the Mayor on her left and the Mayoress on her right. . . .

Now began the ceremony of making a new burgess. In the first place, the Mayor, after a few introductory words, in which he feelingly referred to the absence of Mr. Nicolini through illness, called upon the town clerk to read the resolution conferring the freedom of the borough on Mme. Patti. This done, the new burgess advanced to the table, took the oath, which bound her, among other things, to obey the Mayor of Brecon for the time being, and signed the freemen's roll with, as someone said, "a steady hand and a sweet smile."

It was now the business of the Mayor to ask Mme. Patti's acceptance of a costly casket, containing the certificate of her freedom. This is a very beautiful example of its kind, surmounted by the goat of Wales, and enriched in various ways, notably by a representation in relief of Craig-y-Nos Castle. Expectation among the great audience was keen when the Eisteddfod conductor (Mr. Rhys

Davies, J.P.) announced that Mme. Patti would return thanks. "With a song!" exclaimed a voice at the far end of the hall; and the interruption called forth hearty cheering. But the diva, only just recovering from illness, could not sing, and her thanks were given by proxy, Mr. Spalding being put up for that purpose. Lord Tredegar followed, with words of congratulation to the youngest burgess, and so the municipal ceremony came to an end.

But Mme. Patti was not yet to be liberated. She had offered a gold-mounted baton to the conductor of the male voice choir which came out first in a previous competition. That choir now sang the principal test piece in admirable style, which done, the conductor advanced to the front, bent his knee, and received from the donor's hand his glittering prize. . . . The name of the successful competitor for the bardic chair having been proclaimed, that gentleman was led forward to be installed in due form. A sword in a dilapidated leather case, an historic weapon, I understand, was held above his head by Mme. Patti, the Mayor and Mayoress, and Lord Tredegar, while the conductor recited some formula in Welsh and the audience gave stentorian responses. With this came to an end Mme. Patti's labours, and she retired, the street procession reforming to escort her to the station with no abatement of pomp and circumstance. Thus closed a very remarkable demonstration in honour of a great artist, most excellent neighbour.

I cannot finish this message more appropriately than by quoting a sonnet on Mme. Patti which won the prize to-day. It is by Mr. J. Hutchinson, of the Middle Temple Library, and runs thus:

> Great Queen of Song, accept this votive wreath,
> Culled from Parnassus, where the Muses oft
> Have stopped to catch, borne upward through the soft,
> Still ambient air, thy voice, holding their breath
> In deep, entrancèd silence still as death—
> Euterpe dropping from her lips her flute,
> And e'en Apollo envious standing mute,
> Whilst thou, inspired as one that ministreth
> Before his altar, told'st the sweet, sad tale
> Of human love—tale old but ever new—
> In varied forms, in gentle *Lucia's* sighs,
> In *Norma's* rage, in *Gretchen's* dying wail,
> *Amina's* moan—in tones that sweeter grew
> The longer heard, and, heard, are memories.

APPENDIX CC

FORTY YEARS BEFORE THE LONDON PUBLIC

(From the *Sunday Times,* November 24, 1901)

FOR exactly forty years the famous prima donna has held undisputed sway in the hearts of the English people as the greatest of living singers; and that the sovereignty still endures there is ample proof in such a gathering as that which assembled in the Albert Hall last Thursday evening. Really, to bestow fresh honours upon Patti, upon whom they have been heaped by nearly every European "crowned head" of her time, would, after all, be akin to "painting the lily." *Vox populi, vox Dei;* and if the old adage be true, then no nobler distinction could fall to an artist than the tribute of an assemblage of ten thousand persons drawn together by the sole magic of her name and for the sole delight of listening to her still incomparable singing. The scene may be familiar enough, but each year that it is reënacted it becomes more remarkable, more noteworthy; and in the present instance it was peculiarly so because the crowd was by far the largest and most brilliant that had attended a Patti concert in the evening for several seasons.

A dissertation upon "The Born Singer Made Perfect by the Highest Order of Vocal Art" is never out of place just after Adelina Patti has tripped upon the stage or the concert platform. But, at this moment, enough that we find embodied in Mme. Patti a forcible illustration of the Darwinian theory relating to the "survival of the fittest." So far there survives in her all that is best in the teaching of the great Italian school. The trouble is that one does not see indications of a possible perpetuation of that survival. One can only rejoice so long as Mme. Patti remains an active exponent of her art—an unanswerable argument in favour of her remaining before the public for as many seasons to come as it may please her to do so.

It is indeed marvellous how little the golden voice loses of its pristine freshness, vigour, and charm. The "Jewel Song," the "Batti, batti," the "Bacio" of the other night were no mere echoes of the past, but very actual and very beautiful replicas of the original. The tender pathos of the "Home, sweet home," the infinite grace and humour of the "Comin' thro' the rye," were part of a mystery to which Patti alone holds the clue. And then, what a delight to once more hear her in Wagner's "Träume," which, when she sings it, has a fascination that it never has on the lips of any other artist. Tone, phrasing, color, diction, and German accent are alike faultless. The choice of Tosti's piquant "Serenata" as an encore after "Träume" was perhaps less due to its Wagnerian character than the fact that Mlle. Clara Eissler could furnish a harp accompaniment for one as well as the other. With these exceptions, Mme. Patti's accompaniments were played by Mr. Wilhelm Ganz, Mr. Sewell taking charge of the remainder.

Madame Clara Butt, in capital voice, gave a broad, dramatic rendering of "Divinités du Styx." Mr. William Green and Mr. Kennerley Rumford in turn earned genuine successes; as did Miss Eldina Bligh with her violin solos and Herr Wilhelm Backhaus in pianoforte pieces by Grieg and Liszt. In short, there was ample material for enjoyment from beginning to end of the concert.

APPENDIX DD

ADELINA PATTI: A FAREWELL APPRECIATION

(Joseph Bennett, in the *Daily Telegraph*, December 1, 1906)

THIRTY-FOUR years ago I wrote a column article for this journal, headed [with the same name] as is that just now beginning. The time was July, 1872, and the immediate provocation to utterance the great singer's first appearance as *Valentina* in "Les Huguenots." She was then in the full bloom of her powers. Eleven years had passed since she stepped upon the stage as a novice—if ever she had a novitiate—or, at any rate, as a young and inexperienced débutante, charged to assert herself on the most difficult stage in the world, and before an audience not apt to receive newcomers with open arms. The child—for in years she was nothing more—came as a stranger amongst us, but on that point let me be egotistical enough to quote from my old article:

"She came, as amateurs of opera well remember, unheralded by trumpet-blowing, and unsupported by organised enthusiasm (an article at that time largely manufactured). In plain terms, she took her chance with the public, resting solely upon personal merits for a favourable issue. The result is matter of history, and in it genuine talent may discover ample reason for hope and confidence. We do not overlook the gifts of person and manner which were adventitious but important aids to Mme. Patti's triumph, and still form an element in her unmatched perfection; but, these things apart, it is encouraging to see how genius can make its way to the front and there command approval."

The words above cited were written with all the circumstances of the artist's early career well in mind, and the long years that have since come and gone do not affect their propriety. But time has piled up other evidence to the same effect—piled it up as the an-

cient Egyptians built the Pyramids, ever tending to an apex and a consummation, which has now been reached; for to-day Adelina Patti retires from the exercise of her profession, and, in the Albert Hall, bids her admirers a long farewell, after forty-five years of service. Any review of a career so extended and so famous must needs be of interest, but within the limits of a newspaper column only the more salient points can be touched. To those I invite the reader's attention.

Calling to mind that "little Lina," as Maurice Strakosch used to style his sister-in-law and pupil, came to London without heralds, nobody is surprised to hear that the two operatic managers who then "flourished" in the metropolis looked somewhat askance at the new candidate for their good graces. She was almost unknown; she was so young, so *petite,* in comparison with the voluminous and commanding prime donne of the day; and so untried upon a great stage that the wonder is the aspirant was not sent away empty of all save barren promises. An impresario is, perhaps, not the wisest of men, even in his own vocation.

I recall the incident of Gounod's "Faust"; how Frederic Gye and Augustus Harris *père* travelled to Paris, heard the novelty, and came back saying that there were only two "numbers" of special value in it—a soldiers' chorus and one for old men. "Faust" was declined. The chief of the rival house, a man of *esprit,* probably thought that any decision reached by his opponent must, on that very account, be wrong, and presently took up the running, with what result everybody knows. In the case of Adelina Patti, it was Mr. Gye's turn to be in luck, and to bag a veritable mascotte, whose influence caused showers of golden blessings to rain upon Covent Garden.

The début (May 14, 1861) was a surprise for London. Like a bolt out of the blue for unexpectedness came this girlish *Amina,* and warbled Bellini's ornate strains, "as effortless as woodland nooks send violets up and paint them blue." The victory was complete. Critics were unanimous, but this was a case in which the public needed neither prompting nor guidance. They placed the small stranger's feet upon their own necks, and gloried in being her subjects. Still, there were some who said: "Another light soprano, that is all. A

very good one, no doubt, and the musically frivolous will rejoice in her; but we await a higher good." These did not know "little Lina," nor what, as an apparition, she signified.

For some time she played the light soprano rôles, London becoming familiar with her *Violetta, Lucia, Zerlina, Rosina,* and not a few more. But all this time she was dreaming of conquest on another plane. Growing experience of art in relation to life gave her, in common with every such aspirant, a more serious outlook, and the outlook stimulated ambition. She would appear as a dramatic soprano, and one night in the later sixties—I forget the exact date—she walked the stage in the garb of Verdi's *Leonora,* amid the dark shadows of tragedy. The effort was not then repeated, and there were some who proclaimed a defeat. Vaulting ambition, in their view, had o'erleaped itself. I cannot deny the record that the artist, for some reason or other, drew back from the part. A reasonable assumption is that she failed to satisfy herself, and recoiled the better to leap forward later.

The leap was made in 1872, and resulted in a triumph the memory of which remains with me, clear and moving, to this day. So encouraged, Mme. Patti lost no time in making another inroad upon the domain of dramatic soprani, and, also in 1872, appeared as *Valentina* in "Les Huguenots," the occasion being her own "benefit." It was a moving performance, and seems to have moved me, for I wrote, àpropos to its immediate effect: "Five times was Mme. Patti summoned before the curtain amid roars of applause, having to pick her way through the flowers with which the stage was covered, and then to load herself with the pretty tributes till she looked like nothing so much as an animated bouquet."

Becoming bolder with success, the public's favourite essayed (July, 1885) to play *Carmen*—a character part demanding a temperament which was not hers, and one, moreover, which demanded an actress rather than a singer. It is likely that the artist had some doubts as to the result of this venture, but it was necessary for her to take it up in order to share in the applause which the public were eager to bestow upon every representative of a character in part repellent, yet altogether fascinating. In her embodiment of the heroine, Mme. Patti, with singular good judgment, elected to rely

more upon the fatalism in the gipsy's nature than upon more demonstrative traits. I remember being struck with the intensity of the impression she made in the card scene and in the final situation. So far, good; but Mme. Patti's *Carmen,* with all its merits, failed to hold the public securely, and the artist did not persevere.

In the foregoing remarks I have touched the main points of Mme. Patti's career—those, namely, which indicate development and progress as an operatic artist. By such she is and will be judged, and her place in the hierarchy of the lyric stage determined. She has no cause to fear the judgment of the future, not even when the influences of proximity have, through flux of time, entirely ceased to act.

A long time has passed since Mme. Patti took part in musical festivals, or in concerts other than those which bear her own name. But she is remembered as "a bright particular star" on the platform as well as on the stage. I recall the part she took in Costa's "Naaman," and the delightful simplicity with which she sang the music of the little Hebrew maid who dwelt in the house of the Syrian leper and played so great a part in bringing about his cure. Mme. Patti has appeared also at the Handel festivals, singing brilliantly such airs as "From mighty kings," and executing the Handelian "divisions" as though to the manner born. But all this class of work belongs to a somewhat distant past, and there is no need to tell how more recent time has been spent, beyond mention of the fact that the artist's occasional tours with a few of her favourite songs have served to make her person known to a generation unborn when she was in her prime, and to convey some idea of the vocal charm which made her path through life a *via triumphalis.*

Of Mme. Patti's social success this is not the place to speak, and the task may well be left to her biographer, who will have to describe, as best he may, her career at the glittering Court of the Third [?] Empire, as the châtelaine of a Welsh castle, and as Lady Bountiful of half a county. Varied scenes, a crowded life and much experience of "men and cities" are further material for future record, none of which do those desire to lose who know that this unique artist stands, in many respects, apart from all her kind. Who does not wish her well through the time that lies before her,

and desire that, as she has given exquisite pleasure to thousands by the exercise of her wonderful gift, so she may herself find equal delight in the passage of her maturer years, when the old music has taken a subtler form and offers a deeper meaning? With some such hope as this, I feel sure that Adelina Patti's audience to day will watch her depart from among them.

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